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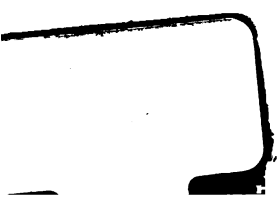

Mary Goodman

ST. MARGARET'S CAVE:

OR,

THE NUN'S STORY.

An Ancient Legend.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

ELIZABETH HELME,

AUTHOR OF ALBERT, FARMER OF INGLEWOOD FOREST, LOUISA, &c. &c.

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ST. MARGARET'S CAVE;

OR,

THE NUN'S STORY.

CHAP. I.

DURING the whole night, Leopold, who did not sleep soundly, heard the rustling of the rushes on which the friar laid; for his uneasiness and surprize drove from him every idea of rest until the break of day, when nature exhausted, and weary with thought, he found in involuntary sleep a short forgetfulness of torturing remembrances. Leopold had also rested but little, yet accustomed to rise with the lark, he gently stole from his rushy couch, and

careful of awakening the friar, left the cave, and walked out to enjoy the fresh breezes of the morning.

The turrets of St. Margaret's caught his attention, and directing his steps that way, he strolled through the cloisters into the body of the chapel, where he amused himself for a considerable time in examining all around him. At length his meditation was disturbed by the sound of approaching steps, and advancing to meet them, he turned suddenly upon the aged David, who had repaired thither, as he was frequently accustomed, to join in matins with the friar. Thus unexpectingly meeting with a stranger, combined apparently to some yet stronger cause, had the most sensible effect upon the good old man, for fixing his eyes on Leopold, starting back,

back, and standing motionless, he exclaimed, crossing himself,

"Holy Virgin! who art thou?"

"I pray your pardon, father," answered the youth, "I have unwillingly surprized you. I am a stranger, and came last night to father Austin's cell; I left the good man sleeping, and walked out to enjoy the morning air, when the chapel attracted my curiosity and made me enter."

As Leopold spoke, the eyes of David were rivetted upon him.——"I am a weak and a foolish old man," returned he, "excuse me, I was taken by surprize.—The father is not wont to sleep so late, I fear he is not well."

"In truth I fear not," answered Leopold, "for he rested not during the night, which made me the more careful

of disturbing him.——With a heart to reverence *his* virtues and *your* age, my presence has apparently been vexatious to both."

"Say, not so, good youth," answered David, "the friar is neither capricious nor unjust, your presence, therefore, could not be displeasing to him, and for myself, I frankly declare that no sentiment but surprize occasioned my conduct at this our first meeing.——But I will go forth—my heart is uneasy for him—I expected to have found him at matins: it is past his usual hour."

Leopold, without explaining the business that brough him to Austin, accompanied David to the cave, where they found him still sleeping.

"On my life," said David, "I have not seen him so sound asleep for years

Heaven

Heaven grant it prognosticate no evil; his life is a thousand times more precious to me than my own."

"He was by no means well yesterevening," replied Leopold, "therefore disturb him not. Let us wait his awaking: sleep will restore him."

David agreed with the youth, and both, seating themselves upon a projection of the rock, remained silent. The friar's sleep, though apparently sound, was not undisturbed; for starting, he twice called aloud upon the name of Adelaide.

"The father dreams," said David, fearful that from his twice articulating a female name, the stranger should form some unjust surmise: "he thinks not waking upon women, his thoughts are more highly placed."

"I mean not to lessen the father's sanctity," replied Leopold, "but pardon me if I dissent from you. He called, I deem, upon the abbess Adelaide, a woman whose idea would not pollute the remembrance of a saint."

The surprize of David at the chapel was trifling, compared to what he felt at this reply; but, the father awaking, he made no answer.

"Shame upon my idleness," said he, looking around him; "my honest David are you there? and my young guest too; how could you both suffer me to sleep so long?—My mind has been so busied in scenes long past, that I have not only neglected my duties to Heaven, but those of hospitality."

The friar then, in few words, explained to David the business that had brought

brought Leopold thither, and also informed the youth, that David was the long-tried and faithful servant of the house of Fitzwalter; after which they adjourned to the chapel, where they joined the father in his devotions.

The graceful ease of Leopold's manner, and his attention not only to the friar but to the aged David, interested the hearts of both in his favour, and prayers being concluded, and their spirits recruited by what homely fare the friar had to bestow, he reminded his guest of the promise he had made him the evening before. David rose to withdraw; but Austin, having asked Leopold if he had any objection to his remaining, and on his answering in the negative, he desired him to resume his

place, which being complied with, the youth began his story.

* * * * *

'My good father,—I shall make a sorry historian; yet in order to explain in what manner I became acquainted with what appears to cause you so much wonder, it may be necessary to lay the whole of my insignificant life before you.—My father is an inn-yard-keeper, in a small hamlet, at the distance of three leagues from Marseilles. I am his second son, my elder brother dying young, and no other child by my mother succeeding me. Think me not ungrateful, nor wanting in filial duty, when I speak merely truth. My father's disposition was harsh and unbending,

unbending, and I felt it the more severely, as it was frequently exerted towards my mother, the remembrance of whose tenderness for me, even now, makes my heart glow with gratitude. What that affection might have proved, had it been cemented with years and increasing obligation, I know not, for at the early age of nine I lost her, by a sudden and violent death, a large piece of timber falling from one of the vine-presses, and killing her upon the spot. Though young, I was old enough to be sensible of my misfortune, and that the more keenly, as I had no one left to supply her place.

My father, Heaven forgive me if I judge erroneously, felt no violent sorrow. He said she was a sickly, discontented, pining woman, whose loss

he must supply by a healthy active wife; a speech I thought so unfeeling and horrible, that it became imprinted upon my youthful imagination, in characters never to be effaced. To prove that he spoke as he thought, in a month after her decease he married, and brought home the daughter of a peasant at some distance from us, and who speedily began to make me feel the sorrows my youth must struggle with, until I attained years and strength sufficient to seek another shelter. Not to weary you, I underwent various mortifications, with scarcely a beam of satisfaction, until I attained my twelfth year, by which time my mother-in-law had presented my father with two sons. At that period I became acquainted with the good friar, father John, by a trifling

trifling occurrence which I must relate to you.

I was one day employed in tying up the vines, which were loaded with fruit, in my father's ground, when I discovered a venerable old man, clothed in a cloak and cowl, seated by the road side. The thick foliage of the vineyard concealed me, and curiosity prompted me to observe his actions. He wiped the drops of perspiration from his wrinkled forehead, he raised his eyes to Heaven, and in a low voice ejaculated a prayer of thankfulness, then opened a leathern bag that laid by his side, and taking out a slice of black bread, put it to his lips.

My temper is naturally vivacious; I never staid to recollect that the meanness of prying had shewn me the situa-

tion of the friar, but hastily tearing off the largest and best bunch of grapes I could find, I rushed through the inclosure, and in a moment stood before him.

"My good father," said I, "you are in a perspiration, and must be thirsty; a few grapes will moisten your bread, and I have plenty in the vineyard."

"Youth," replied the father, "are these your own grapes, that you give so freely?"

"Yes, father, I have been tying them up, and supporting the branches ever since day-break; eat them, indeed they are ripe, the hot sun for this last month has made them quite purple."

"You are the master of the vineyard then?" returned the friar dryly.

"No,

"No, but my father is."

"And how dare you give away your father's property without his consent?"

For a moment I felt confused, but my accustomed spirits speedily overcame it.

"Father," replied I, "the birds of the air do not crave my father's leave to take his grapes; is his own son less free than they?"

"Youth," answered the friar, "birds take simply for their own wants, not for those of others."

"Pardon me, father, I have seen them feed their young with the produce of our vineyard a hundred times."

"You are a skilful young logician," replied he smiling. "Birds act according to the simple dictates of nature, and

and cannot err, nor would they be sensible if they did."

"I wish I was a bird then, father, for I always know when I act wrong, it makes me so uncomfortable; you are a wise man, and a priest, but were you to talk till to-morrow, you would not convince me, for I don't feel uneasy at all now; not in the least, as I did when I galloped the old mare too fast—nor as I did when I took some of Claude Rouse's apples that hung over our orchard. Then father, for the first, I was so vexed, that I laid down by the poor beast and cried; and for the apples, when I remembered I was a thief, I threw them all back again into his ground."

"Where do you live, my lad?" asked the friar.

"I pointed

"I pointed out our cottage at the side of the hill, a short distance from where we stood.

"'Tis near the hour of noon," said the friar, "do you not go home to dinner?"

"I have had grapes for dinner: I am in no haste to go home."

"Perhaps you do not go home to your family till evening, and then you make a cheerful meal together?"

"I have never made a cheerful meal since my mother died."

"How long is it since you lost her?"

"Three years."

"The dead rest from their labours. Your mother's spirit is I trust at peace; and it is sinful to bewail a deceased parent so severely, as to become insensible

sible of the affection of those who survive."

"I am insensible of no one's affection, father; no one ever loved me but my mother, and I never loved any one but her."

The friar chid me; but the gentleness of his manner attracted my confidence, and as he sat to repose himself, I insensibly opened my whole heart to him. After about an hour's conversation he said:

"I shall remain all night in your hamlet; do yo think your father can let me sleep at his house?"

"That he can," replied I, "if he will, for you shall have my bed, and I will sleep in the barn; but all I fear is, he will refuse you, for he does not like priests."

"We

"We will try him," answered he—"Come, you shall shew me the way."

The good man was weary, and leaning upon my shoulder, we reached the cottage. My father and my mother-in-law were seated at the door, under the shade of a large tree. The friar quickly made known his request, adding, that he had for the last eighteen months been travelling from Lower Saxony, stopping occasionally, as his health or exhausted strength required, at the monasteries he passed.

"From Lower Saxony!" Faith and troth, answered my father, "but you have had a precious journey, and at your age too. In your place, father, I should have preferred ending my days snugly in my monastery."

The friar's reply was replete with mildness and piety, and in spite of my father's

father's harsh manners, forced him to treat him with respect. My mother-in-law, too, was pregnant, and she entreated the father's prayers for her safety. In short they consented to give him shelter for the night; but, to my great mortification, he refused my bed, and slept upon the ground, according to the severe rules of his order.

'During the evening, my father appeared inquisitive, respecting the inhabitants and customs of the country from whence he came; and the friar answered all his questions in a manner and language so different to what I had been accustomed to, that I could have listened to him for ever.

'The friar having satisfied my father's curiosity, the discourse turned on the good man's future destination.

"And where, in the devil's name, are

are you trudging to now?" said my father, "the sea, in three leagues further, will stop your progress."

"Son," replied the friar mildly, "I go in God's name. My destination is Palestine; there do I mean to finish my worldly pilgrimage, and lay my bones where the most blessed saints, martyrs, and holy men have trodden."

"By my soul;" answered my father, "I hope the time is far distant; but I had rather lay my body in France, than pass even a month of my life in such a distant country, for all the benefit to my bones."

"Speak not so irreligiously," replied the friar; "I have, during my whole life, had an inclination to visit the Holy-Land, but never till within this two years thought to accomplish it."

"It

"It was hardly worth while at your time of day," answered my father grossly.

"That is more than the wisest can aver," replied he; "for the most insignificant causes sometimes produce the greatest effects; and I will candidly own to you what at length determined me, and made me procure leave of the superior of our order for my journey. One night that my mind had been particularly employed in contemplating different subjects respecting the Holy Land, I went to rest late. In my sleep methought St. Francis, our patron, stood before me, and, with a smiling countenance, said, 'Gratify thy wishes, John, by hastening to Palestine; I will support thee on thy way. There thou shalt inhabit a tree, whose branches

shall

shall spread over Germany, and from whose root shall be raised houses, to the honour of the Blessed Virgin, and St. Francis." This dream made an impression I resolved not to resist. I related it to our superior, who gave me leave of absence, and, for these last eighteen months, as quickly as my age would permit, have been pursuing my journey. I mean to embark at Marseilles, where I learned, some days ago, that a ship lay bound to Joppa, and take my passage to Palestine."

My father laughed heartily at the friar's dream; and, as they separated for the night, advised him to dream again, that St. Francis ordered him to return, as he was too old to take so long a journey. I know not why, but the friar's discourse had made such an

impression

impression on me, that I could not sleep, and rising at day-break, I went to seek him. He had already risen from his hard bed, and was employed in prayer. Without speaking I knelt by his side, and his matins ended, we entered into discourse.

" I wish, father, said I, " that I was going to Jerusalem with you; I would be your dutiful son, and you should be my honoured father."

" My dear child," answered he, " 'tis against the rules of my order to take a companion; and were it not so, do you think I would deprive a parent of his child, however I might gratify myself?"

" Father," said I, uncovering my arms; " look at these bruises, are these marks of affection?—are these the gifts

of

of a parent?" I saw the tears stand in the friar's eyes. "God, my son," said he, "will enable you to bear with resignation what is unavoidable. In a few years you will be able to earn your own existence, and then no duty requires you to suffer ill treatment."

More discourse passed, but the friar, wishing to pursue his way, after having taken some slight refreshment, bade my father adieu, and commending me to be dutiful and serve God, left us.

I could not suppress my tears at his departure, but was quickly roused from my grief, by my father's applying some smart strokes with a cane across my shoulders.——"I owe thee that," said he, "for bringing home a canting priest yesterday, and if thou dost

dost not dry thy tears and hasten to labour, I will double the dose."

'I had no resource but passive obedience, and therefore went to the vineyard; but the whole day nothing was in my thoughts but accompanying the friar to Jerusalem. In short, farther, the idea became so strongly fixed, that I resolved to hazard all consequences, to gratify my wishes. I well knew that the good man would never consent to take me in a clandestine manner, but I flattered myself that if I could get on board of ship without his knowledge, he was too gentle to be long angry, and could not send me back when we had once sailed.

'This resolution taken with more art than you might suppose I possessed, I

in

in the evening I returned early; but instead of going to sleep, no sooner watched the family to rest, than I arose, and leaving the house as gently as possible, took the road to Marseilles, where I had once before been with my father. Fear almost lent me wings, and at sun-rise I found myself at the port. I eagerly inquired for a ship bound to Joppa, and received for answer, that if I had any business on board, I was too late, for that the wind serving, they were raising their anchor, and on the point of sailing.

This information caused me a mixture of fear and joy; the first, lest I should be left behind, the second, that if I once got on board, I should be safe from pursuit. Money I had none, but my entreaties and tears so

far prevailed, that an old sailor at length took me in his boat to the ship's side, where I pretended business with the friar, who they informed me came on board the night before, but so greatly fatigued that he was not risen, and as all were employed, directed me to his cabin.

'My point thus far gained, I was in no haste to appear before him, as I feared he would cause me to be sent back; but profiting by the general confusion attendant on sailing, concealed myself in the hold, where I lay undisturbed, till the vessel had at least been six hours on her way.

'To describe the astonishment of the father when I first stood before him, or my own confusion, is beyond my power. He chid me severely, and represented my

my disobedient flight in the strongest colours; to all of which I made no reply but tears, until he observed, that he should take means to send me back on the return of the ship. I answered passionately—"Then will I throw myself into the sea. If you will suffer me to be with you, I will be your dutiful and obedient son; but if not, God will forgive me, for he knows what I have to suffer at home."

"Holy Virgin!" answered the good man, "teach me how to act with this child, at once the most gentle and most determined of spirits."

"Father," said I, throwing myself at his feet," do but try me, and if ever I offend you send me back."

"At least," replied he, forcing a severity into his features that did not ap-

pertain to them, "I will keep you, till you have learned the sin of rushing, uncalled, into your Creator's presence."

'From this hour we were friends, and the most affectionate parent could not have loved me better than the friar. Even during our voyage he began to instruct me, and I am convinced that before we reached Palestine, parting would have been as painful to him as to myself.

'On our arrival at Joppa, the friar gave letters to the captain of the vessel, to be remitted to my father on his return, which, however, was not to take place for some months, as he was upon a trading voyage.

'From Joppa we pursued our way to Rama, where we were met by the superior of the capuchins, who obtained leave

leave of the father guardian, for friar John to continue his way to Jerusalem, and on hearing my story, gave me leave to accompany him. I was now at the height of my wishes; but for the present must omit a description of the holy city, and all the sacred spots I visited with my patron: let it suffice, that the good father having performed all those duties his station required, was accommodated with a cell, and small oratory, near the monastery of St. Saviour, adjoining the gate of Damascus, in the city of Jerusalem. Here, to be brief, I continued the good man's constant, and, as he was pleased to say, attentive pupil, for five years, during which time no pains on his part were wanting; and for myself, I confess his kindness made me love him above all

men: his lessons, therefore, were delightful to me, and to listen to his voice, and hear his instructions, the highest gratification I had ever experienced. It was his intention to have brought me up to the church, but the liveliness of my disposition, which even the ill-usage I had met with at home could not curb, made him relinquish that opinion, and he resolved, a short time before his death, to interest some of the great families he was known to in Germany in my favour.——But, alas! I had scarcely attained the age when we learn the value of a friend, and that youth most needs an adviser, when he was snatched from me.

'The good man was sent for to take the confession of a Christian merchant, at the distance of a league from our dwelling,

dwelling, and being much in years and somewhat lame, was necessitated to go on a mule, and on his return was thrown, and one of his legs broken.

"From the first appearance of this accident, there was but small hopes of his recovery; yet he languished for two months before I had the sorrow of losing him. During this interval I never left him but once, and that at his own express desire, to fetch his papers from the oratory. "I have none," said he, "that can be either serviceable or detrimental to any person, therefore it is immaterial into whose hands they fall; one excepted, which is the confession of a lady long since dead, and whose mind was as pure as those of the angels among whom she now resides. This paper," continued the father,

" cannot, I apprehend, be of the least value to any one; yet there was a fervency in her manner when she gave it me, that has placed a value upon it, and though now almost sixteen years back, I cannot resolve to destroy it. It is signed with her own name, and those of two of the most distinguished characters in Germany, the count and countess De Hoffman, also that of a worthy and faithful attendant."

" Is there any one, father," exclaimed I, " to whom I can convey it? I am young and strong, and heed neither difficulties nor distance to satisfy your wishes."

" My dear youth, you meet my desires. The lady was buried in the convent of St. Mary, Bremen, and could I by any means convey it to the superior of

of that institution, it would be in safety, should it ever be required. I would also wish the count and countess De Hoffman apprized where it is placed; and as there is no worldly object at this moment so near my heart as yourself, I will also endeavour to write a few lines to recommend you to their notice: I flatter myself the good countess will not neglect my recommendation."

'However sensible of the friar's goodness, my own advantage was but a secondary consideration while he was in danger. With the utmost difficulty he accomplished what he proposed, writing a letter in my favour to the countess De Hoffman; and two days after I had the misfortune to lose the only friend I had in the world. Pardon

me,' continued the youth, wiping off a few tears that fell on his cheek; 'but on this subject I am not master of myself. To Nicholas Sternheim I owe my existence, but to friar John what words can express my obligations? But for him, my mind had been uncultivated, and, like a rank soil, had produced nothing but weeds. With indefatigable industry he sowed the seeds of rectitude and honour in my heart, and should they not bear fruit, mine will be the sin, not his.—Thus, when I compare my obligations to him and to my father, I consider the one as the parent of my soul, the other merely the father of my body.

'I must not here omit to tell you, that during the whole time I had been in Palestine, I had never heard from my

my father, though the same captain had been thrice at Joppa; and had any letters been sent, he would undoubtedly have caused them to have been conveyed to the monastery.

'Before my good patron died, he remonstrated, in the strongest terms, on the undutifulness of estranging myself from my father, and conjured me, as I meant to prosper hereafter, to return, and ask his blessing before I proceeded to Germany.—"You have nothing now to fear," said he, "your father will find himself relieved from the burden of your maintenance, and, no doubt, will at least receive you kindly. I would, my son," continued he, "that I had something to bequeath, that might enable you to pursue your way more eligibly than I can promise my-

self, but the wish is vain—however, when once in France, Italy, or Germany, use my name, and declare your errand, and every monastery you pass will entertain and give you succour, till you reach the place where, I hope, first for my sake, and afterwards for your own, you will find friends."

'The night before his death, after recommending me to the priests, seeing me plunged in sorrow, he said, "Suppress this unavailing grief, my son; old men die, and young ones spring up—I am convinced, and have long been so, that our meeting was for some wise purpose, beyond the contracted sight of man to discover. Be virtuous, and thou hast nought to fear; and should, hereafter, a success beyond thy present hopes attend thee, remember

ber in thy orisons friar John, and in thy gratitude, his blessed patron St. Francis."

'An hour after this speech the good man yielded up his pure soul to his Creator, and left me, as I thought, without a friend under the wide expanse of heaven.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Stranger's Story continued.

'THE last duties paid to my patron, I bade adieu to the fathers, who gave me what assistance they had in their power, and took the way to the port of Gaza, where I was informed a vessel lay on the point of sailing for the mouth of the Rhone, and in which I embarked, and after a not unpleasant voyage arrived safe in France. The assistance the fathers had bestowed upon me, was barely sufficient to enable me to reach home, where, I must confess, I had never intruded, but in compliance with the friar's request.

'You

'You may, perhaps, suppose my long absence had softened my father's acrimony towards me; on the contrary, it had encreased it, and I was received with every taunting expression, that bitterness and cruelty could devise. Even the mild example of the friar had not taught me to suppress my passions, and with few words I was on the point of leaving the house, when my father called me back, commanding me to stay, under penalty of his curse. For two days after this his conduct was gloomy and reserved; but it was plain, had he given his words vent, they would have been no kinder than heretofore. On the second evening I ventured to inform him, that I was entrusted by the father with papers designed for the superior of the convent

of

of St. Mary's, near Bremen, and craved his permission to depart speedily on my journey. Guess my distress and vexation, when he bluntly refused me, and that in terms of the most unfeeling harshness. He asked me, "whether I did not think I had enjoyed a lazy life long enough, that I still wanted to continue it. "No, no," added he, "these follies are over. When I heard you were in Palestine, I thought the old man might make you a priest, and cannot say, if that could have been effected, but I should have willingly consented; as it is, those hopes are vain, and you must use more activity than you have hitherto done.—You are of an age to save me the wages of a labourer in the vineyard, and, in future, I shall expect that return for the expences I

have been at upon your account." 'I replied, with more forwardness than perhaps became me, that my obedience to my dear friend's request could by no means encrease that expence: that I was aware of the length of the journey, but asked no assistance on that account, as I would entreat the hospitality of the convents that I passed, nay sooner live on berries by the way, than fail in the promise I had solemnly given. I then, hoping to render my suit more propitious, mentioned the recommendatory letter I possessed to the countess De Hoffman, and that I flattered myself it might be the means of easing him, in future, from the trouble I occasioned him.

'This information, instead of palliating, encreased his anger, though from what

what motive I know not, unless it was that he feared losing the power of tyranizing over me. He peremptorily insisted on seeing this recommendation, and though I assured him it was sealed, and that I was unacquainted with the contents, he persisted in his demand.

'With reluctance I at length complied, but was far from expecting the result of my acquiescence; for he no sooner read the direction, than he tore open the letter: but what the contents were I know not, for he had scarcely time to peruse them, before he threw it into the fire, with an execration at once directed at myself and the good friar.

'My anger at this conduct was too great for me to dare give it vent before a parent; I therefore rose, and was preparing to leave the apartment, when suddenly

suddenly recollecting himself, he called me back, commanding me to bring what manuscript papers the old hypocrite had left with me. Shall I confess, I nearly forgot my duty on his using that opprobrious appellation; I, however, struggled with my passion, and succeeded in concealing it in silence, until repeating his command, I replied, that I neither was, nor ever had been, acquainted with any person who deserved that name; but that if, which I could scarcely suppose, he alluded to the sainted friar John, what remained entrusted by him to me, should never leave my possession, till given into those hands for whom it was designed.

'My father rose to strike me, but avoiding his blow I said,—"Do not let passion make you forget you are a father

a father, lest I should unfortunately inherit enough of the same spirit to forget I am a son." 'With these words I rushed out of his presence, and regained my chamber, where my first care was to conceal in my bosom the paper addressed to the abbess of St. Mary's, and after a short time hearing all quiet, I retired to rest.

'The occurrences of the evening were too freshly imprinted upon my memory to suffer me to sleep. The partition between my chamber, and that where my father slept, was slight; and from repeatedly hearing my name mentioned, I at length lent an attentive ear: my mother-in-law was blaming him severely, for not suffering me to go where the friar had recommended.

"You may do as you please," said she,

she, "but for my part, I should think his absence a thorn out of my side. There now is my poor boys, Nicholas and Anthony, they will never be pampered and educated like him. All the villagers who have seen him since his return say he looks like a knight at least; and by my troth, if pride could make him a king, I am sure he possesses a sufficient quantity."

"I will take care," answered my father, "to make him obedient to your commands, and in that case to give you no cause of complaint."

"As for that he is civil enough," said she; but then I would sooner do any thing myself than employ him. In the first place he is so awkward, and in the next, it always appears as if he was doing me a favour. God rest your late

wife's

wife's soul, Nicholas," continued she, "but no one can be hanged for thinking, but that boy is no more like you than my grandmother. Your wife, too, was a fine madam, that held no converse with her neighbours. I fear she went more among her betters than was conducive to your honour."

'My father's reply was in a low voice: he apparently, however, attempted to vindicate my mother's fame, for my step-dame's voice was loud and discontented. My father appeared to give way to the torrent, for he made no reply till his wife ceased.

"Women are ever obstinate and self-willed," at lenghth said he, "and force men to disclose what they wish to conceal—know then, that my late wife possessed a considerable sum of money, which

which on our marriage was settled upon the children of our union; Leopold, therefore, has the whole claim upon this, either when he comes of age, or I leave him to his own guidance.—Need I tell thee, Theresa, that thou and thy children are a thousand times dearer to me than this boy? whom I would to fortune was in his grave, sooner than he should give thee a moment's uneasiness."

'This assurance appeared to palliate my step-dame's wrath.—"But does he know of this money?" said she.

"That is what I am not assured of," answered he, "but I rather fear he does, from the foolish fondness of his mother; and he was old enough at her death to remember, and will not fail to claim it. Now, Theresa, many things

things may happen if he stays at home, for he is not immortal, and then the money will remain whole for thee; while, on the contrary, should he claim it and depart, it will be entirely lost to us for ever."

'The conversation was considerably longer, but to the same purport, therefore immaterial to repeat. My father, however, over-rated my mother's partiality for me, for I had never heard a syllable of money I had a right to inherit before the foregoing conversation, which at once made me form a resolution, from which I determined not to be swerved.

'It was the month of May. The dialogue I had heard, and the thoughts it gave rise to, banished sleep; I therefore arose with the first streaks of light, and

and cloathing myself without noise, descended to the lower apartment, where unbarring the door gently, without money, and ought but a change of linen, and the lady's confession in my bosom, I abandoned myself to the world at large, convinced that no one could speak of, or treat more unfeelingly, an unoffending youth, than my own father had done.

I had travelled for some leagues without stopping, when the calls of hunger made me feel I should have much to endure in the long journey I had undertaken. It was beyond mid-day before I met with any one to whom I could apply, when seeing an aged woman seated at the door of a hut milking a goat, I assumed courage to ask her for a draught of milk. The

dame viewed me for a moment in silence, then snatching up a jug that stood by her side, said, "Drink and welcome: you are, I presume, a traveller? and in troth a young one; many a tear has your poor parents shed to part from you, I warrant, but never heed, keep up your spirits, and trust in Heaven, and the Holy Virgin will preserve you from all harm."

"I thanked the good woman, and was about taking my leave, when she interrupted me, by asking—"how far I was going? and how I was provided for my journey?"

"On my mentioning Bremen, in Lower Saxony, the good woman crossed herself.—"I have heard of such distant countries," said she, "but I know nothing of them; I fear they are sad places.

places. I have lived fourscore years, and never was more than four leagues from this cottage in my life."

'Not to weary you, the dame became so interested for me, that she insisted on my partaking her dinner, after which, with many salutary and friendly cautions, we parted.

CHAP. III.

The Stranger's Story continued.

'I WALKED until it was far advanced in the night, and having reached a monastery of Benedictines, craved their hospitality, which they readily granted, and on being informed of my errand, gave me a recommendation to another house of their order, at the distance of fifteen leagues, from whence I again obtained succour; and indeed, by the kindness of the fathers, met with relief and entertainment during the whole of my long and tedious journey.

'I should not omit to inform you, that

that from the first monastery I reached, I wrote to my father, and candidly confessed having overheard the discourse between him and my mother-in-law. I spoke with sorrow of my misfortune in not being beloved by him, and in the most solemn manner gave up all right to any sum he might hold of mine in right of my mother, and finally entreating pardon for the step I had taken, pleading an irresistible call to fulfil the request of the friar, and to which I the more readily yielded, when I had witnessed from his own lips, that even my eternal absence would give him no concern.

'I shall pass over a toilsome journey which brought me to Bremen. My first visit was to the convent, where ringing at the gate I requested to speak

to the Superior. The porteress informed me she was confined to her chamber, but that if I had ought of consequence to communicate, she would call sister Clarice, to whom the business might be equally imparted.

'Merciful Heaven!' exclaimed the youth, breaking off the thread of his story, the good father faints; is he subject to these fits? he greatly alarmed me yesterday evening.'

By the joint cares of David and Leopold, Austin speedily recovered; but for some moments his mind appeared wandering, for smiting his breast, then raising his hands in an agony of grief, he exclaimed, "Oh Clarice! Heaven to reward thy virtue, has placed thee under an angel's wing, while I accursed ——"

"If

"If the self-devoted servants of the holy church shall pronounce themselves accursed, in whose bosom shall hope spring up?" interrupted David,—"My gracious master, calm your mind; you are anxious to hear this youth's story, but your impatience defeats itself.—Suffer us to withdraw for a few minutes whilst you compose your spirits."

The father bowed his head in token of acquiescence, and Leopold with David left the cave; when Austin humbly kneeling, remained for a half-hour in fervent prayer; then with more composure sought his guests.

In the mean-time David had entered into conversation with Leopold, carefully excusing the conduct of Austin, saying, truly, that the sorrows of his youth had deranged his understanding,

and that it was only by the most rigid piety, prayer, and an exemplary life, that he had succeeded in recovering the sanity he at present possessed; that his flights, if they could be called such, were now very rare, and the paroxysms short, and always to be overcome by leaving him a short time to his recollection.

"Heaven mitigate the acuteness of his sufferings," said Leopold, "his sorrows appear to me not only respectable but sacred. Wishes are all I have in my power, for with a disposition to love and succour all mankind, I want the means, and with an arm able to wield the sword, I sink in inactive and inglorious ease.—Oh," continued he with enthusiasm, "my soul languishes for some blissful opportunity to shew,

that

that neither the meanness of my birth, nor the severe usage that cramped my infancy, have had power to extinguish that divine spark of emanation, implanted in my bosom by my great Creator. I feel," added he, "that this strong body and active mind are blessings bestowed upon me for some good purpose, and I will consider them as such; not to be used upon every unworthy occasion, but to be bravely exerted upon the just demands of honour and virtue, and let my life be long or short, at least let me not have lived in vain."

David regarded the youth at once with a mixture of wonder and admiration; but before he could reply, they perceived Austin advancing towards them. Both hastened to meet him.

"My good father," said Leopold, "I rejoice to see you better; I wish that you would permit me to transfer to you the duty I owed to my dear friend, friar John: he flattered me by saying I was become necessary to his happiness. Alas! I am now necessary to the happiness of no one ——"

"I accept the offer," replied Austin, "if you can, on your part, adopt so unworthy a substitute for so good a man."

"With rapture," answered the youth, "I will consider that I have once more a parent, a friend to direct my unexperienced youth, to reprove my errors, to cultivate the good he may find in my disposition, and to assist me in eradicating the evil."

"We will now," said the friar, "if

it

it be your pleasure, my gentle guest, return to the story which my unfortunate weakness broke off; I trust I shall be more collected during the remainder of your recital."

"I trust you will," answered he; "but, father, call me Leopold, or son; those names favour more of friendship and less of ceremony."

With such conversation they returned to the cave, where Leopold resumed his story.

* * * * *

'I waited at the grate until the porteress called the lady Clarice, a woman apparently of the age of forty-five (for her veil was thrown back), and whose whole appearance at once inspired me with respect and esteem.'

The friar groaned, but almost momentarily recovered his emotion, and Leopold continued:

'In few words I related my errand, during which the lady viewed me with so scrutinizing and piercing attention, that had I been an impostor, I am convinced my conscious face must have declared it. She next questioned me with extreme minuteness, to all of which I replied with truth, saving only that I spared my father's character, respecting the letter to the countess; for though I hold it right to disclose my whole sorrows to you, as to my soul's director, I did not judge it necessary in this case, though, on my own account, I could have laid my whole heart open to her inspection.

'I presented the packet which contained

tained the confession, when glancing at the direction, she said, "these characters are indeed truly the good friar's, I knew them from my youth, and will not fail to present your commission to our Superior. I know not if ever this writing may be called for, but well I recollect enquiries have been made for friar John, but on what account I am not acquainted."

"The lady then left me, and continued absent some time. On her return she said, "Young man, the lady Abbess prays you to receive her thanks, and requests that, as you are a stranger, you will accept this small token as a requital for the trouble you have taken (presenting me a purse): repose yourself from the fatigue you have undergone, then let me see you again; in

the

the mean-time consider how we may serve you."

'Though I felt humiliated to receive payment for the service I had rendered, yet the manner in which it was presented, joined with my poverty, obliged me to accept it.

'I repaired to a place of entertainment at about a league from the convent, where in a few days I not only recovered my fatigue, but also, by the assistance of the present I had received, made my appearance more respectable.

'I had been accustomed to an active life, and therefore found my time hang heavy upon my hands, and resolved, when I should have once more seen the lady Clarice, to prosecute my way to the capital, and offer my services to join the army. This intention was, however,

however, frustrated; for on my again visiting St. Mary's, and seeing the sister, she yet more particularly questioned me than even at our first meeting, and when I was preparing to bid her farewell, requested me to call upon her the next day, as she might then, perhaps, consider of something to make me defer my journey.

'I obeyed this order with pleasure, and on the ensuing morning, when I appeared at the grate, she presented me a letter addressed to the baron De Hoffman, saying, "At the distance of a quarter of a league from hence dwells my nephew, take him this letter, and when he has read it, return and let me know what reception he gives you: his father is absent, or I would have recommended you to him." 'My surprise at this

this kindness scarcely left me power to thank her; to me it appeared as if the hand of Heaven was in it, as notwithstanding my father had torn the friar's letter, and I considered that advantage as entirely lost, that I should procure another, and though not to the same person, yet to one most nearly allied to her. I know not how I reached the castle of De Hoffman. My heart beat high with expectancy, and my sanguine imagination gave way to the idea, that I should meet the favour of the baron, and by degrees raise myself from the obscurity in which I was born.

On reaching the gates, and announcing that I brought a letter from the lady Clarice of St. Mary's, I was immediately shewn into a hall, where I had not waited long, before a youth of a noble

noble appearance, and apparently not older than myself, entered. I presented my letter, but he had scarcely read it, when he held out his hand, saying,

"The wishes of my aunts, Clarice and Adelaide, are ever sacred to me, though in this instance I can claim no merit, as you carry in your countenance a recommendation which my heart cannot refuse." I thanked this generous young nobleman, whose friendly manners appeared to banish the distance fortune had placed before us. He informed me, that he was left at Bremen for the convenience of pursuing his studies, while his father was engaged in a law-suit, in a distant province, respecting some estates that appertained to his mother, the late countess. By this discourse I learned that the lady to whom

father

father John had recommended me was dead.

'After passing two hours with the baron, I returned to the convent, to inform the ladies of my success, and to offer my thanks. The Abbess was still indisposed, but the lady Clarice warmly wished me health and prosperity, and desired I would sometimes call and inform her of my success.

'Father, I should but weary you, were I to relate all the friendship, nay brotherly kindness I received from Ferdinand De Hoffman. I accompanied him in all his excursions, I studied with him, and, in fine, enjoyed, through his bounty, all the advantages that fortune could have given me. He was particularly employed in learning the English language, a study I also entered on with

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an alacrity, that enabled me in twelve months to speak it with the facility you witness. During the whole of this period, the count remained absent, his business still detaining him, and being unwilling his son should lose the improvement so necessary at his age, he debarred himself the satisfaction of his company, rather than break upon his studies.

'During this interval we frequently called at St. Mary's, where we were constantly received by the lady Clarice, the baron's aunt; the abbess Adelaide seldom appearing before strangers, or even her own family, unless upon very particular occasions.

'At length a messenger announced to the baron that he might expect his father in a few days. Impatient to testify

testify his duty and embrace a parent, Ferdinand and myself, attended by two domestics, left the castle the ensuing day, in order to meet him. As we were apprised of his route, we continued our way until the third evening, when we met him at a house of entertainment, where he had halted for the night. Ferdinand's first duty paid, he hastened to me. "Leopold," said he, "My father wishes to see you, he is prepared to esteem you, to thank you for the attention you have paid his son, and I trust, to give you more substantial proofs of his friendship than is in my power to bestow." 'I could only reply by pressing the hand which the noble youth presented to lead me into the count's presence.

"On entering the apartment, "My dear

dear father," said he, "as yet you can only love Leopold for my sake, but once known, you will love him for his own; but as his merits would be ill related in his presence, I shall leave them to your own discernment."

Warmly impressed with gratitude for all the favours I had received from the generous Ferdinand, I advanced towards the count; but viewing me with a mixture of anger and horror, he started back, and remained fixed in a silent scrutiny of my person.

"My dear father, will you not speak to my friend, Leopold," said Ferdinand.

"To whom?"—answered the count, endeavouring to overcome the strangeness of his manner.

"To Leopold Sternheim," returned Ferdinand,

Ferdinand, my friend and constant companion during your absence."

"Leopold Sternheim," repeated the count, apparently recollecting himself. "Leopold Sternheim! From whence comes he?"

"My dear sir," answered Ferdinand, "I informed you of all respecting him before he appeared in your presence, and I had hoped you would have received him as became his merit." Then turning to me, he added in a low voice, "Leopold, may I presume so far upon your friendship, as to entreat your absence. My father is frequently thus: fatigue to-day has overpowered him, a short repose will restore his usual calmness."

I instantly left the apartment, as you

you may judge not much prejudiced in the count's favour, and had remained near two hours alone, before Ferdinand joined me.

"My good friend," said he, "I will not apologize to you for the constitutional weakness of my father. Thank Heaven he is retired to rest, to-morrow you will see him another man."

I answered, "That I had at first feared, that by some unknown or unforeseen event, I had incurred the count's anger."

Ferdinand smiled at the surmise. "How was that possible?" said he: "Two minutes before your entrance, in answer to what I said respecting my friendship for you, he replied, that he took your fortune upon himself.—Unhappily, he is subject to these strange attacks. My mother, during her

her life, was distressed at them beyond measure; nay, I have been inclined to think, the uneasiness they caused her, injured her constitution, and hastened her death."

'The count's conduct thus explained, inspired me with commisseration, and we conversed on the subject a considerable time, when Ferdinand added, "The most trifling causes will sometimes overpower him, as dreams, family portraits, the presence of those he has not seen for a considerable time; and what is yet more strange, the company of his nearest connexions frequently excite them."

The friar sighed so heavily, that Leopold paused; when David reached him a wooden vessel that contained some water, which having drank, he prayed the youth to continue his story.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Stranger's Story continued.

'FERDINAND, the ensuing morning, informed me, he found his father much restored; that he himself began a conversation respecting the strangeness of his conduct the evening before; inquired particularly after me, and finally requested, that I might again be presented to him.

'Though this information, in some measure, emboldened me, yet I entered the count's presence with sentiments very different from what I experienced the day before. The first time I had wished to esteem him for his

own sake, but now I felt that, if at all, it must be because he was the father of Ferdinand. He, however, received me with kindness, and offered me his hand: but still to me it appeared to be an act of force, rather than inclination; for he evidently recoiled when I touched it, and even seemed to shudder with disgust at the sound of my voice.

'The concern of Ferdinand was visible in his looks, and I should have considered myself wanting in friendship to him, to have appeared to notice the conduct of his father.

'We soon left the inn, and travelled the whole of the day, and till the evening was far advanced; for the moon being nearly at the full, riding was more pleasant than during the heat.

Passing

Passing through a thick forest, willing to give the count and his son an opportunity of conversing together, and buried myself in unpleasant reflections, I had fallen behind the rest of the party, when suddenly a loud cry of halt, accompanied with much brutal language, shook me from my reverie, and made me quicken my pace. The clashing of weapons, and the sight of a formidable number of men mounted on mules, and drawn up to oppose our passage, speedily informed me of the business. Ferdinand, with the open bravery of his nature, followed by four servants, had rushed upon them, a step which the wary villains turned to their advantage, by nearly encircling them round, while four of their number attacked the count and our two remaining domestics.

My appearance rendered the parties equal. I rushed before the count, whose weapon was struck down, and by the favour of Heaven was fortunate enough to shield him, and severely wound two of the assassins. As cowardice ever accompanies guilt, the fall of their companions so completely intimidated the remaining two, that they instantly turned from us and fled.

'Ferdinand and his party had been equally successful, and the robbers completely defeated took different ways, and eluded our vengeance in the thick recesses of the wood, leaving their wounded companions to our mercy.

'It was not deemed prudent by the count to waste any time in taking the unhappy wretches who had fallen, and lay weltering in their blood, save only one,

one, whom we tied upon his mule; nor yet was it safe to pursue the runaways, who might be reinforced by numbers; therefore using our best speed, in somewhat more than an hour we reached the house where it was proposed to lodge for the night. Here our prisoner had his wounds dressed: they consisted of some deep cuts, given, as he said, by my sword. On being questioned, he confessed their intention was to have robbed and slain the count and his whole party, whom they did not expect to find so strong, being informed of his having only four domestics with him; a piece of intelligence they had received from their companions at some distance.

'The count and Ferdinand had fortunately escaped unhurt, but our men

had received some trifling wounds, and I had also a small cut in the side from the sword of one of the robbers; but elated with the approbation that Ferdinand expressed at my conduct, and gratified by the praises and thanks bestowed upon me by the count, who did not scruple to call me his preserver, I scarcely bestowed a thought upon it, until Ferdinand suddenly starting back, exclaimed, "Gracious Heaven! my dear Leopold, you are wounded, your vest is bathed in blood."

'It was in vain that I assured them it was scarcely skin deep; both the count and his son insisted on its being examined, the latter, in the warmth of the moment, even condescending to assist in disrobing me. My wound was a small thrust, which had grazed the

the rib, and simply needed binding up, to heal in a few days; strange to relate, the count no sooner saw it than he relapsed into one of those paroxysms so alarming to me the evening before, for sinking into a seat, and trembling as if in the fit of an ague, he exclaimed, "It is verified—the hand of God is in this, and who shall withstand it?"

"Ferdinand, though visibly alarmed for his father, tied up my wound, then turned to endeavour to alleviate the agitation under which he apparently laboured; but his care was unavailing, the count's disorder rather increased than diminished, and it was ten days before he was able to proceed on his journey.

"In the mean time the robber was

delivered over to justice, but his companions, for he declared their retreat, aware of their danger, had fled.

'Warm as the count's behaviour to me had been the night we met the robbers, I was not once admitted into his presence during his confinement: he requesting to see no one but his son, and two of his domestics. At length we continued our route and reached the castle of De Hoffman. The count's coolness by degrees decreased, and he would frequently talk to me a considerable time; but always respecting my future intentions, the situation of my parents, and the education and employments of my infancy; all of which I replied to, as far as in my power, with truth and candour.

'After

'After a residence of two months at Bremen, the count one day informed his son, that he should again leave him for a short time, as he had some business to transact in Italy that could no longer be delayed. Ferdinand, with duty and affection, tendered his service, either to take it upon himself, or to accompany his father, but he declined both, and with four domestics soon after set out on his journey.

'Four months of almost uninterrupted happiness succeeded. I loved Ferdinand as a brother, and he truly returned my affection. This satisfaction was, however, too great to be lasting, and the count's return put it to flight. Those strange paroxysms, that used to give us so much uneasiness, had now given way to a gloomy and fixed

discontent with all around him. Ferdinand and myself particularly appeared to meet his displeasure, and I could no longer refrain expressing to my friend, that I was convinced that I must by some means have incurred the count's anger, and therefore thought it better I should retire from his family, as that might be one means of lessening his disgust.

'Ferdinand's reply was dictated by the most pure affection and friendship: he confessed his father's conduct too glaring to be overlooked, but entreated me to take no step hastily.

"I will to-night," said he, "go to St. Mary's, and consult my aunts, Clarice and Adelaide; their advice will be dictated by candour and prudence, and that shall determine us. But of this,

Leopold,

Leopold, be assured, that however high fortune may place me, and howsoever low she may cast thee, I will through every vicissitude consider thee as my brother. So may Heaven prosper me as I ratify this promise."

'The same evening Ferdinand went to St. Mary's. He was absent much longer than in his usual visits, and on his return informed me, "that he had laid all our vexations before his beloved relatives, and that they, in consequence, had expressed a desire that I would oblige them, by taking a voyage to England on some business of importance, and which," said he, "you will be informed of to-morrow night, when they have appointed me to bring you with me. The commission," added he, "I am not yet intrusted with, but,

I believe, from some observations I have made, that it respects a beautiful young girl, who accompanied my aunts during the latter part of our conversation, and who, they informed me, is the daughter of an English lord, named Fitzwalter, an old and respected friend of our family."

'Though grieved to leave Ferdinand, yet I could not but wish to convince the lady Clarice, by my fidelity in executing what she might intrust to me, that I was worthy of the recommendation she had before honoured me with.

'On the ensuing evening, at the hour of nine, we left the castle, and hastened to St. Mary's. Ferdinand was ever received there with less ceremony than any one else, from his consanguinity to the Abbess and the lady Clarice, both of

whom were warmly attached to him, as they had before been to his mother.

'The porteress, on their ringing at the gate, informed us, that the Abbess and the lady Clarice were in the chapel, where, if we pleased, we might join them.

'Ferdinand led the way. The evening was dark, and a single lamp, burning before the image of the Virgin, enlightened the chapel.

"Is it you, Ferdinand?" said a voice, which I recognized for that of the lady Clarice.

"It is, madam," replied Ferdinand, "accompanied by Leopold, who willingly undertakes whatever you shall appoint, and which I will vouch with my life he executes faithfully."

"We doubt it not, nor shall he find

us ungrateful. Come forward young man," addressing me: then turning to the lady Adelaide, she added in a low voice, "You are prepared, such things are common."

'At these words we drew near. The Abbess stood immediately within the beams of the lamp; her veil was thrown back, and she leaned apparently for support on the arm of her sister.—Oh! father, never before did my eyes behold so angelic a female form; though beyond the bloom of youth, even the dress of her order had not power to lessen these charms, that in my eyes appeared to raise her above mortality. I neither spoke nor moved; my whole being appeared lost in admiration and wonder ——

"Youth," interrupted Austin hastily,

tily, the blush of anger tinging his before palid cheek, "keep to your relation: you acted sinfully to give way to improper ideas in so sacred a place."

'Father,' returned Leopold, with more haughtiness than he had before shewn, 'you are yet to learn my character. I speak as I felt: when shame mingles with my thoughts, I shall undoubtedly endeavour to conceal them. The lady Adelaide is not formed to create loose desires. Had you seen her, you would have felt the truth of what I assert; for dark indeed must that heart be, that could regard her with less reverence than that with which she inspired me.'

The friar sighed heavily, tears streamed from his eyes. "Pardon me, my son," said he calmly, "at your age, prone

prone myself to error, I unjustly judged you the same."

Leopold respectfully raised the friar's hand to his lips, then continued.

'I call Heaven to witness, father, that I regarded the lady Adelaide with an admiration as pure, as I should have felt for a celestial being, suddenly placed before me, and with equal reverence I could have fallen at her feet. Her form was grace and mingled dignity, though, like a flower nipped by an untimely frost, it appeared bent, rather by sorrow than time.'

The father pulled his cowl lower on his brows, but was unnoticed by Leopold, who continued.

'Her face,—but I cannot particularize it, father. It was such a face as a good painter would have given to a spirit

spirit of peace, sent to speak consolation to weak and suffering mortality; for her eyes at once expressed innocence, affection, resignation, and hope.

"Gentle youth," at length said the lady Adelaide, "recommended by my nephew Ferdinand, and not less so by your own appearance, I wish you to seek out a respectable and holy friar' named Austin, to present him a letter from me, and also to inform him, that the dying confession of the lady Blanch Fitzwalter is now in my possession and shall be forth-coming when necessary. Say also to him, that I honoured and loved the lady, whose character I understand is so falsely stigmatized, and will willingly take upon myself the care of her daughter Margaret, until such time as her claim shall be allowed; or

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in case power should overcome right, during my life."

'At that moment we were joined by the young and beautiful girl that Ferdinand had seen the evening before. On the Abbess introducing me to her, as the person meant to go to England, with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, and the innocence of a sister, she laid her hand on my arm, and cautiously and particularly gave me your address. "Tell the good man," said she, "that Isabel has not forgotten him, and that, in all her travels, she has met no society so dear to her, as that which occasionally assembled in his cell, until she knew these ladies. Say also, should you see the respectable Dame Alice, that I trust once more to feel the pressure of her maternal arms.

Say,

Say to my sister, my beloved Margaret, that three of our uneasy years are past, and I look forward to meet her in happier days.——Look yonder," said she, pointing to a plain white marble monument in the choir, " in that grave sleeps her mother. Tell Margaret that there I kneel, and call upon the sainted spirit to record and witness at once my truth to her, and my veneration for a much-lamented father's memory."

' After some discourse, during which the Abbess commanded me to secresy, she gave me the letter I presented to you, as did also the youthful lady Isabel one for her sister, and one for dame Alice, and all wishing me success, they left the chapel.

' I know not how to explain what I felt at that moment. I could almost

have

have clasped the garment of the Superior, and stood gazing after her as long as the beams of the lamp would permit.

"Is she not bewitchingly lovely?" said Ferdinand, "never did my eyes behold a form, in which frankness and innocence were so happily blended."

"She is, indeed, all you say," replied I, "and more than language can express. I glory to be employed by her, not only in this trifle, but would willingly devote my whole life to her service."

"You are happy, Leopold," answered Ferdinand, "to be able to oblige her; for me, tied down by paternal duty, it is impossible, but I candidly confess I envy you."

"Envy me! do you not enjoy her affection,

affection, the liberty of seeing her daily, of obliging her, of testifying your love and duty? Indeed, my dear friend, to use your own words, I envy you.—Rank and fortune never yet interested me sufficiently to make me anxious to possess them; but to call such a woman relation, methinks, had I empires I would give them."

"Is it possible," said Ferdinand, "that you can have been speaking of my aunt Adelaide? I protest, if so, I was deceived, I thought you alluded to the youthful Isabel."

"Nothing further from my thoughts. The lady Isabel is indeed lovely, yet she inspires no emotion in my bosom, but such as are the ordinary consequences of youth and innocence; but for the lady Abbess, my sentiments are greatly

greatly different, though as chaste as those I feel for the original of that picture," pointing to one of the Holy Virgin near the altar.

'Ferdinand shook me heartily by the hand. "Leopold," said he, "I believe you are well assured that your happiness is dear to me; but to confess a truth, I feel more interested for that lovely girl, than I am even willing to allow to myself. I never saw her before yester-evening, and yet she furnished contemplation for the whole night. I love you as a brother, and could be content to share with you all the advantages of wealth, yet I could not endure to consider you as a rival; for though fortune has done little for you, nature has done enough to make me fear you."

'I could

'I could not suppress a smile at Ferdinand's discourse. "I have indeed heard," said I, "that the passion of love renders men blind, but till this moment I had no idea to how great a degree.——If you attempt to gain the heart of this fair English woman,—may you be successful,—may she deserve the preference you give her, and may every one concur in wishing your happiness as warmly as myself."

'We conversed little more on the subject; for Ferdinand changed it, to inform me that the evening before the Abbess had impowered him to furnish me with ample means to take my intended journey. Ferdinand and myself then agreed to acquaint his father, that I should be absent for some time on business in England; but the ladies Clarice

rice and Adelaide having requested secrecy as to the motive, it was resolved strictly to fulfil their wishes.

'The count was alone on our return, and on being admitted into his presence, after thanking him for all the favours I had received from his house, I proceeded to inform him, that I proposed leaving him on the ensuing day. I shall now doubtless surprise you, father. Instead of the satisfaction I had flattered myself the count would experience at this intelligence, his rage knew no bounds. He called me an ungrateful runaway, and forbad me, on any account to presume to leave the castle, under pain of his severest displeasure; a command with which he left us. Neither Ferdinand nor myself answered to his discourse, so greatly had

had it surprised us. My generous friend was vexed and grieved beyond the power of speech; his face was flushed with anger, and his whole frame visibly agitated. My silence arose from another motive; my temper is naturally warm and impatient, and I feared to give my thoughts vent in words, lest I should not only forget the obligations I owed the count, but wound his son, whom I esteemed as a brother.

"Leopold," at length said Ferdinand, "I love my father; he is the author of my life, and should he require it, I would sacrifice it at his command: but my honour, my perseverance, and constancy in right, I received from a yet higher Power, and to that Power I am accountable for them. I know my father's temper well; he has to-night

commanded, and I have no doubt will use means to prevent your undertaking the promised journey, though from what cause I know not——"

"By Heaven," exclaimed I, interrupting him, "he shall then pierce through my heart, for nothing but death shall prevent my executing the commission entrusted to me."

"Leopold," answered Ferdinand, "I would willingly, if possible, act uprightly, without giving offence to my father; yet be assured, I will not tamely see you insulted. At early day I will hasten to procure the sums the lady Adelaide has intrusted me to receive for your use, and you shall depart, as speedily as you think fit, in spite of all opposition."

'At that moment a domestic entered,

tered, to inform Ferdinand that the count desired our presence in the hall; we immediately obeyed the summons. He had, in some measure, overcome the first burst of passion, or rather it had given way to the more hateful vice of dissimulation.

" I have been too warm," said he, as we entered, " let it be forgotten, Leopold; you will oblige me by declining your intended journey, I have other views for you, views that may raise you to honour and independence."

' The count's conduct had long ceased to astonish me; but resolved to persevere in my intention of visiting England, I replied, that however sensible of his generosity, I had firmly determined to take my journey.

' This reply again threw him off hi;

guard, and rage was once more predominant. He loaded me with invectives, and concluded by saying, that he should take effectual means to prevent my leaving the castle, until he delivered me safe into the hands of my father. Ferdinand till now had remained silent; but as the count ceased, preventing my reply, he said,

"Pardon me, my lord, but your conduct appears so contradictory, that it forces even your son to remark it. A short hour since Leopold was an ungrateful wretch and a runaway, together with many other appellations that I cannot conceive he deserves. A few moments since you forgot all these misdeeds, when you offered your interest to raise him to honour and independence: that proposal declined, again he

he becomes vile and unworthy. Surely, surely, my lord, such behaviour is incomprehensible, and, suffer me to add, more derogatory to yourself, than to the youth thus insulted."

"Retire to your chamber, boy," replied the count, "when I require your opinion, give it; till then let obedience close your lips."

"My lord," answered Ferdinand, "be yourself the witness, if ever, in the minutest point, I have hitherto forgotten what is due to you as a parent; but when you forget what is due to this youth, who can in no wise have given you offence, excuse me if I wish you to take a moment for reflexion."

"Again I command you to retire," replied the count, "and remember I

bid you beware, lest your folly become your punishment."

"Rather let me incur the odium of folly," interrupted Ferdinand passionately, "than that of dishonour or vice. What right have you, my lord, or any one, to prescribe the path a free man is to walk, much more to detain him? If he has injured any person, let that man stand forth, and my life to his, Leopold shall acquit himself, in a manner that becomes his own honour and my friendship."

"Provoke me not," said the count, lest I dishonour thee before my vassals, by making them drag thee from my presence."

"Dishonour not yourself by such a command," replied Ferdinand with equal

equal heat, " for, by my soul, the first of your domestics that offers me insult, receives my dagger's point in his heart. —Nay, nay, my lord, strike me if you please,"—for the count advanced towards him—" from you I will bear it as becomes a son, but beware how you involve the unhappy men who call you master."

' I cannot describe, father, continued Leopold, what this contention between the count and Ferdinand made me suffer. I well knew they loved each other, and was grieved, even to my heart, to be the cause of discord.

" Cease," said I, rushing before Ferdinand, " let me not, I conjure you, be an object of dissention between a father and son. Suffer me to depart, my lord. I know not why, but my

presence has ever been hateful and repugnant to you: with my good will never more shall it vex you."

"Hateful and repugnant it may be," returned the count haughtily, "but too insignificant to vex me."

"However insignificant, my lord," I replied, "you surely give me consequence, when you condescend to become my gaoler. If I have committed any crime, declare it; I am ready to answer it according to the laws of my country. If you cannot accuse me of any, by what right do you arraign a power over me?"

"By a right I shall not trouble myself to explain—by a claim given me by your father."

"My father!" exclaimed I with astonishment, and an emotion I could not

not repress: "alas, I never experienced the affection of a father."

'The reflection that I owed this new vexation, in all probability, to my father's cruelty, overpowered me; but casting my eyes towards the count, all selfish thoughts at once vanished: one of his accustomed paroxysms had seized him, and had not both Ferdinand and myself supported him, he must have fallen.'

"Merciful Heaven, pardon me!" said the virtuous youth, "for speaking so harshly as I have done. My father, I am now convinced, is not master of himself; these incomprehensible humours are the effect of a disordered imagination. Dear Leopold, call help, the fit is uncommonly strong."

'I obeyed, and the domestic administering

nistering strong waters, the count began to revive, when seizing the opportunity of the general confusion, I left the hall, and hastening to my chamber, made up a packet of linen, and leaving a few lines for Ferdinand, with a small sum I had in my purse, I resolved to depart on my intended journey. I found no difficulty in accomplishing this plan, as the count's illness employed all, and no orders had been issued to detain me; therefore with a heart sad only at leaving Ferdinand, I quitted the castle of De Hoffman.

'As I had no doubt but the count, when his senses returned, would cause me to be sought after, I avoided the town of Bremen and the direct road, and using my best speed during the night, reached a village at the distance of

of six leagues early in the morning, from whence I continued my way to Embden; there I fortunately found a vessel ready to sail for Yarmouth, and embarking, I arrived in England near three weeks since, which period has been employed in reaching your dwelling, father.'

CHAP. V.

"My gentle guest," said the friar, as the youth paused, "your story has at once interested and surprised me. The unfortunate infirmity of the count De Hoffman I sincerely lament. I well knew him some years since, a brave and virtuous young man; but severe family misfortunes, that I know he has to combat with, have undoubtedly weakened his intellects. I rejoice to learn, that Ferdinand promises to do honour to the rank he will hold in society. For the ladies Adelaide and Clarice, ever united in the bands of affection, I give thanks to Heaven that they enjoy that peace which virtue alone can bestow.

stow. Long, long may it continue; may no fell assassin break on their tranquillity, but full of days, and ripe for heaven, may their passage from time to eternity be as gentle as their lives have been innocent."

The friar's voice, as he concluded, was interrupted by his emotion; but speedily recovering, he with firmness continued:

"For you, Leopold, your journey hither has been long and wearisome, but it was undertaken in a cause which renders labour pleasant, in the cause of an oppressed and virtuous orphan, and when Heaven delegates men for errands such as these, it surely testifies, that they are appointed for more than common purposes. Mark my words, my son, and let them emulate you, to merit

merit the particular favours with which Providence appears to have distinguished you. Born a peasant, a virtuous and learned man by education first raised you above the meanness of your birth, and by his dying request, stamped an opinion of your integrity, that will render you respectable to all good men. Your father's unkindness, however it must ever wound you as a son, you should endeavour to bear with patience and fortitude, and consider it only as one mean which your great Creator employs, to perfect his own wise purposes. Your residence in Germany with Ferdinand De Hoffman has, in great measure, completed your education, and you are now chosen as the instrument that brings us intelligence of what we have long sought after in vain, the

the attestation of the lady Blanch Fitzwalter; and of this be assured, that should I enjoy the satisfaction of seeing the beloved child of my dearest friend established in the estate and house of her father, she shall not want a remembrancer of your merits."

"I am already overpaid," answered Leopold: "to oblige the abbess Adelaide, to deserve your approbation, and to serve the lady Margaret, is a sufficient recompence. Employ me father, prove me to the quick; I long to enjoy your friendship and affection, and would wish to earn the distinction."

"You have *earned* and possess it," replied Austin.—"I am subject to fits of petulance, as you have already experienced, but bear with me, my son,

I am

I am sick with many sorrows, and the barbed arrow of sin rankles in my heart; to prove my trust in you, I shall entreat you to take a journey from hence to the town of Berwick, to inform the good Franciscans there, that I have at length obtained intelligence of the lady Blanch's confession. They merit this attention from us, as they are sincere in their good wishes to Margaret, and ever promised, in case of my death, to bring forward all the proof that we possessed of her legitimacy. The distance to Berwick from hence is little more than fifteen miles, and when your spirits are recruited by rest, you will oblige me by going thither."

"I am ready whenever you please, father: I am young and strong, and

feel no fatigue. To you I will entrust the lady Isabel's letters, and depart immediately."

"Not so," returned the father, "some days hence will be time enough. Before you return to Germany, we will, by some means, raise a small sum, to render your journey back less wearisome than it was hither."

"A very small sum will suffice," replied Leopold. "I experience now the convenience of being bred abstemiously."

The remainder of the day was passed in arrangements for the future, and, as on the night before, the youth laid himself down to rest on some rushes in the friar's cell.

* * * * *

As Margaret had not been at the cave

cave the preceding day, she was firmly expected on the second evening; but the expectation was vain, and the close of day arrived, without Austin's being gratified by sharing the communication he had received. He would immediately have hastened to the castle, but that he wished to avoid awaking fresh suspicions in the mind of De Launcy; but he commissioned David to make inquiries among the domestics: the result of these were, that both Margaret and Alice were well, but that they kept their apartments more than usual.

This information, in some measure, quieted his fears, and he resolved to wait patiently another day; but Leopold being anxious to bear the friar's message to the Franciscans, it was resolved

solved he should depart on the ensuing morning.

At early dawn Leopold was ready for his journey. The father and David resolved to accompany him to the great road, and as there was a nearer way across the hills, took that path. Restoring Margaret to the honours and fortune due to her was the subject of their discourse. "Though I am blessed with excellent health," said David, "yet I have lived till the age of man is said to be labour and sorrow, and could I once see my beloved young mistress enjoying the rights attached to her birth, methinks I could die in peace."

"And I also, my good David," replied the friar, "should be happy to retire

retire to my convent, and endeavour to forget all worldly things: but never will I abandon the cave while Margaret is in a doubtful state. Though weak, I am not quite powerless, and in a just and virtuous cause the most insignificant being can boast a Supporter, before whom vice flies appalled."

"Father," replied Leopold, "in this case yours is the head to direct; let my arm, where it may, I conjure you, be the arm to execute. My heart pants for some opportunity to distinguish myself. Graced with neither birth nor honours, deeds alone can give me fame. Though unknown to the lady Margaret, like yourselves, I devote myself to her service. Hers is a cause which every honest mind must espouse; a cause, in which

which I can neither feel danger nor fatigue: and so prosper me, Heaven! as my actions justify my words."

As Leopold spoke, at a short distance from them a kite, bearing a bird in his talons, rose from the side of the mountains, and was in the act of taking his flight, when Leopold hastily stooped, and snatching up a stone, threw it with such well-directed skill, that he struck the destroyer, who letting fall his prey, sought his own safety in flight. "I have failed of my intent," said Leopold, "the devourer has escaped, and the blow was too late given to save the victim." As he spoke, he leaped over the defile that separated them from where the bird had fallen, and picking it up brought it to his companions.—"It is a young dove, father," said he, pre-

presenting it to Austin, " it is not yet dead, but sorely scared, and no doubt wounded with the claws of the kite."

" Prophetic be the omen," said the friar, receiving the bird and putting it in his bosom. " I know not why, Leopold, but my heart beats with increased hope since I have seen you; like the good father John, I think *our* meeting was for no ordinary purpose."

Thus conversing they continued their way, until they reached the descent of the mountain which led to the direct road; where Leopold, shaking David heartily by the hand, and receiving the blessing of the friar, bade them adieu. Seated on the grass, Austin and David followed the youth with their eyes while he continued in sight—" Now the Holy Virgin attend and guide thy steps

steps wherever thou goest," exclaimed David, as Leopold, turning an angle, was lost to their sight—"In my long journey through life I have met with but few hearts like thine."—As David ceased speaking, he turned his eyes on the friar, whose head was sunk on his breast, which heaved with sighs almost to suffocation.

"My dear, my honoured master,' said David, restrain, I conjure you, those painful feelings. Remember only the noble, the generous purpose that now calls upon you."

"I *do* remember it, David,—but I also remember ——"

"Pardon me," replied David, interrupting him, fearing he should relapse into one of those agonies of grief to which he was sometimes subject—"the reason

reason of man is bounded, he sees only the present, and deems it evil, because his narrow comprehension can understand no further; whereas, could his contracted sight extend, he would view himself but as one atom, suffered to act for the universal good of the whole." Austin sighed heavily, and both rising, they retook their way to the cave. The friar's first care was the dove, which taking cautiously from his bosom, he examined what injury it had received. It was slightly wounded in the wing, therefore confining it in the inner recess of the cave, he resolved to keep it till it could secure itself by flight from further danger.

Near sunset the father, who had anxiously expected Margaret the two preceding days, had the satisfaction to see

see her, accompanied by Alice, crossing the space between the wood and his cell.

"Thrice welcome, my friends," cried he, as he hastened to meet them, "had ye known the news that waits ye, ye had not tarried so long."

"Unwilling we have tarried, father," answered Margaret; "ours has been a neglect of necessity, not of choice. That presuming young man, De Launcy, has been my shadow, and every attempt we have made to leave the castle till to-night, I have found him by my side."

"He appears indeed inclined to watch us," said Alice, "and, no doubt, will follow our steps, if he finds we have avoided him. That may, however, escape his knowledge, for we came by the private path from the

north tower, and as we could not be seen from any of the windows of the great apartments, he may think us in our chamber."

"'Tis well to be cautious," returned Austin; "I trust, Margaret, we shall see the time, when the dastard listener shall be expelled those walls which his actions disgrace.—At present I have more worthy business for your ear; but let us withdraw into the interior of my cell: I believe all secure, but prudence is requisite."

Margaret and Alice followed the father till he considered them safe from surprise; he then related the business of Leopold, shewed them the letter from the abbess Adelaide, and produced those from Isabel to Alice and Margaret. Margaret first read aloud the letter

letter from the Abbess. As she concluded, Alice exclaimed,

"A blessing on that dear child, Isabel; the attachments of her youth appear to strengthen, instead of decreasing by absence ——"

"And the generous lady Adelaide," interrupted Margaret, "how kind, how considerate, how happy is our Isabel under her care. Perhaps she knew my mother, and that makes her thus kindly extend her friendship to me."

"We will make our observations hereafter," said Alice, "for the present read Isabel's letter."

Margaret prepared to obey, first returning the abbess Adelaide's letter to the friar. She observed he put it into his bosom, and as he received it

a burning tear dropped upon her hand. —She then read Isabel's letter:

"My beloved Sister,

"With what pleasure do I embrace this opportunity of assuring you, that the desire nearest my heart is once more to enjoy the company of the friends of my childhood. The good Austin, who I consider the representative of my father; the pious dame Alice, whom I love as a mother; and yourself, my true, my acknowledged elder sister.

"The lady abbess has informed me, she has sent an invitation for you to take up your residence with her. Oh, Margaret! how will you love that charming woman, and also her sister Clarice; I have not a thought but what

what I could disclose to them. Uncertain and uneasy respecting you, for I never hear more from the lady De Launcy than that you are alive, I laid my griefs before them, related all my sorrows, and the cloud that hung over you. Both ladies entered into your cause with a warmth which astonished me, more particularly the lady Adelaide, who appears entirely abstracted from worldly things; and as for many months she had been in possession of the paper sent by friar John, on hearing of your situation, she resolved to write to Austin, as the most secure means of reaching you.

" For myself, I have known little pleasure since we separated, until I came to this house, which my mother suffered me to do with a daughter of

the count De Ranstade's, while she accompanied the lord De Launcy on the king's business to different states. That nobleman does not improve upon a nearer acquaintance. Dame Alice, I know, would chide me, but I believe my mother thinks as I do; she, however enjoys the life she prefers. Rank, precedence, pomp, and shew, with her replace the calm of domestic affection, and satisfied am I to see she is apparently content. To me lord De Launcy puts on the semblance of regard, but it sits upon him like a loose garment, ready to be put off at pleasure. He is a courtier, you know, Margaret; and courtiers, and such people as our friends, have different feelings, and indeed are different beings. Notwithstanding I speak thus lightly, assure the father and

dame

dame Alice, that I have not so far forgotten their lessons, as to be wanting in respect to my mother's husband, though I have sometimes been obliged to remind him I was lord Fitzwalter's daughter. On one of those occasions the baron had forgotten himself so highly, as to speak in unbecoming terms to my mother before me, respecting the expenditure of certain sums. She replied, in what I conceived evasive terms: pardon me if I thought her answer abject, and therefore in reply to something lord De Launcy asked, mentioning my mother as if by accident, I called her the baroness Fitzwalter. The name operated as a charm; it gave my mother back all her consequence, and I could see made the lord De Launcy feel, I was not a proper person to be

at their disputes, for fixing his great black eyes upon me, under which scrutiny mine did not sink, he ceased the discourse. I have yet something more material to tell you. Previous to my coming hither, lady De Launcy gave me to understand, that having my happiness entirely in view, she had chosen me a husband, who she was well assured was calculated to make me so. That at present (thank Heaven) my youth precluded all immediate thoughts; but hereafter, she wished me to consider the son of lord De Launcy, as the man designed for my husband. To this I made little reply, as it was in vain to make any dissention, until there was immediate cause. My mother, in many instances, complains of my obstinacy; but she has dignified, nay

even

even rendered that fault dear to me, by also calling it my father's spirit. I have only to add, my dear Margaret, bear up; a few years will swiftly pass—Sisters in love, we will be so in every thing.

"ISABEL FITZWALTER."

"Though I have not mentioned the good old David, tell him I have not forgotten him, but love him as well as when I sat upon his knee, while he related to me my father's noble conduct at the battle that placed our Henry the Seventh on the throne."

"Lovely, candid Isabel," said the friar, "thou art indeed worthy thy father. Thou truly, as thy mother sayest, inheriteth Fitzwalter's spirit;

not obstinacy, but the promise of unbending honour. Like his, may it ever be employed in the cause of virtue; then, indeed, mayest thou, Margaret, boast a sister, whose rectitude will repay thee for all the sorrow brought on thee by her mother."

Margaret made no reply, but pressed Isabel's letter to her lips.

"Haste," said Alice, "read my letter, my eyes are weak with age, and the sensations the dear Isabel gives rise to, dims them yet more with tears of pleasure."

Margaret obeyed, and read as follows:

"My dear, dear Dame,

"I knew not till yesternight I should enjoy this opportunity, therefore have only

only time to tell you, that I fear I am the same impetuous giddy girl you ever knew me. Perhaps had I remained with you till this time, your precepts and Margaret's example might have had some effect in correcting me: as it is, I fear there will be little alteration till I enjoy that happiness.

"If you have the least love for me, my dear dame, take care of your health, and entreat father Austin to do the same. Should Heaven deprive us of any of our friends, though surrounded with affluence, neither Margaret nor myself could be happy, and you know not what charming pictures my active fancy represents for hereafter.

"I am grown very tall; I am sure I must be taller than you are. They

call me a woman, yet be assured, in my own opinion, I am still

"Your affectionate child,

"ISABEL FITZWALTER."

"The sisters Clarice and Adelaide are charmed with the youth who bears these letters. What a mind must he possess, to travel all the way from Palestine to bring the paper from friar John. From himself I know nothing, but the baron De Hoffman, nephew to the Abbess, is never weary of speaking his praise.

"And truly does he deserve it," said the friar, as Margaret concluded, "never did I see so active a spirit; after walking some hundred miles with only two days rest, he is set off now for Ber-

Berwick, to inform the fathers that we are in possession of your mother's dying avowal. To confess the truth, I am rather at the present unwilling that you should leave the kingdom, however highly I approve of the invitation given by the abbess. Margaret's eighteenth year compleat, we will see what reply lady De Launcy gives to her demands, which if not to our wishes, I shall not consider her in safety here. But first let me ask you, how long young De Launcy means to take up his abode at the castle?"

"On his arrival, his domestics spoke of a few days.—I have heard nothing since," answered Alice.

"We will bear then the inconvenience with patience," replied the friar. "At Leopold's return we must make him

up

up a small purse, and he shall depart for Germany, with your letter of thanks, and an entreaty from me to be favoured, in case of need, with your mother's paper."

As Austin spoke, the dove forced its way through the slender barrier he had made to confine it, and hanging its wing, hopped to Margaret's feet.

"Poor bird," said she, taking it up tenderly, "Is it yours, father?"

"It is yours, if you wish it, Margaret," answered Austin, "you will take more care of it than I can. Leopold rescued it to-day from the claws of a kite."

Margaret received the dove, and the night drawing in, they separated, promising, if possible, to see the father on the morrow.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

In anxious expectation Austin waited eight days the return of Leopold; at that period he began to dread some mishap had befallen him. De Launcy still remained at the castle, and seldom could Margaret find opportunity to visit the friar, who now resolved that if he continued, he would wave his original plan, and send the orphan and Alice, under the protection of Leopold, to Germany. On the ninth morning, as he sat ruminating in his cell, a peasant, directed by some of the villagers, accosted him, and presented him a letter to the following purport:

"*The*

" *The Franciscans of Berwick to their Brother Austin, greeting.*

" The youth, Leopold, whom thou didst send unto us, has been sick, even beyond all hope of recovery; but animated with the daily expectation of returning health, requested us to protract the time of sending thee notice. His anxiety to hasten back makes him regardless of all consequences, and though his fever is decreased, we fear his relapse, should he leave us before his recovery is more ascertained; by the bearer, therefore, lay thy commands to restrain him. As a messenger from the abbess Adelaide, and, as we judge from his whole behaviour, a virtuous youth, he shall receive our kindest care, till such time as he can depart in safety.

" We

"We rejoice at the intelligence thou hast sent us. That the orphan may be reinstated in her right, and the veil of dissimulation plucked from the face of the deceivers, we humbly pray; and trusting the saints have thee in their holy keeping, we remain,

"*Thy Brethren of St. Francis.*"

This letter, though it removed the father's uncertainty respecting Leopold, filled him with uneasiness. By the messenger he returned not only an answer to the Franciscans, but also a letter for the youth, in which he charged him, on his blessing, to be entirely guided by the reverend fathers, and by no means to attempt leaving them without their entire approbation.

The peasant dispatched, Austin communicated

municated the intelligence he had received to David, who shared in his inquietude. He saw with uneasiness that the news had made a deep impression on the friar, and with affectionate solicitude found excuses to attend him the whole day. In the evening, as they sat in the old chapel, Margaret with Alice joined them. Both regretted the ill health of the youth, and pressed Austin, if not too much for his strength, to hasten to him. Austin replied, that to see Leopold was what he most earnesty wished, but that his fears for Margaret riveted him to his present home.

"You have no cause to fear for Margaret," answered Alice, "am not I with her? De Launcy does not appear inclined to trouble us, unless we give

give him opportunity, which we shall be careful to shun."

David joined his persuasions to those of Alice and Margaret, and finally determined Austin, who promised to depart on the ensuing morning.

"Thank you, thank you, my dear father," said Margaret warmly, "were I free to act as I choose, how willingly would I accompany you."

"That, Margaret, would not be quite so proper," returned Alice.

"Not proper?" repeated she, "have you forgotten, Dame, that he came from Palestine to do me right? and, by my life, I would go an equal distance to repay the obligation."

"My dear child," replied Alice, "the warmth of youth misleads you; what is proper for a man would be highly unbecoming

unbecoming in a woman, and might involve her in shame."

A momentary blush crossed Margaret's face.—"Shame," repeated she, "I trust I shall never experience, and must again say, that would my strength bear me, I would adventure to the most distant part of the habitable globe for that generous youth, whom God hath made the instrument, to bring such tidings as will I hope clear the honour of my revered parents.——I would adventure for you, dame.——I would for father Austin.—I would for David,—then why should I not for this poor youth?"

"Because, my love," returned Alice, the world would attach motives to the action, that bring disgrace."

"Then, dame, it is a naughty, nay, a wicked

wicked world. Gratitude was surely implanted in our hearts by our great Creator, and to fail in its observance, is acting against the dictates of conscience and humanity.

"Once restored to your rights, Margaret," said Austin, "I will be the first to claim for the youth Leopold, the reward due to him from the baron Fitzwalter's daughter. Through my hands, or those of Alice, you cannot too munificently acknowledge your sense of his worth."

The shades of night beginning to obscure the horizon, they soon after separated, and returned to their respective homes.

* * * * *

At the break of day Austin arose, and took the way to Berwick. On seeing

seeing Leopold, he was shocked at the alteration sickness had made in his animated features; his senses were, however, perfect, and time alone appeared wanting, to restore him to his wonted health. The youth expressed the utmost joy at seeing Austin.—"Father," said he, "indeed these good friars are cruelly kind; I am convinced exercise would have overcome my malady had they suffered me to use it."

Austin's words were mild, but they were peremptory. He insisted on Leopold remaining at least a month in his present situation. He truly judged that excess of fatigue had brought this illness on the youth, and that rest was the most salutary means to remove it.

For two days Austin remained at Berwick, and on the third retook his

way homeward. On the second evening of his absence, Margaret and Alice walked to the cave, and as they did not meet the friar there, entered the chapel, where they found David seated on a tomb, expecting the return of the father. As they were more early than usual, they resolved to wait some time with him, and discoursing on different subjects, Alice at length said, "I have often wondered, that some of the lords of the domain have not been anxious to repair this chapel, and preserve to posterity so magnificent a monument of antiquity."

"Few of them, I believe, ever bestowed a thought on the subject," replied David, "except my late honoured lord, and I have heard him say that if he

he lived to clear his fortune, it should be one of his first cares."

Margaret made no reply; but by her raised eyes, appeared to register in her memory the intention of her father.

"The gifts and wealth appertaining to it were doubtless seized by foreign enemies," said Alice. "There is a long tale annexed to it, but whether true or false I know not."

"Born on this spot, I have heard the story as it has been handed down for some centuries, and though, doubtless, many errors have crept in, the foundation is probably true," answered David.

"With dame Alice's leave I should like to hear it," said Margaret, "it will pass the time while we wait for the father."

"I will

" I will relate it willingly," returned she; " but you must expect it rudely told, as my account is merely collected from old ballads on the subject." So saying, the dame began the story.

CHAP. VII.

THE LEGEND OF MAUD OF BERWICK, AND HUBERT ST. PIERCY.

At a short distance from this hamlet, some centuries ago, stood a castle, whose wide extended domain appertained to Roger, earl of Durham, and at a further distance of three miles, divided only by a thick forest, was the small estate and castle of Hubert St. Piercy, a knight of high renown, but whose honour was greater than his wealth.

The earl was a proud man, and from some cause, but what I know not, there

there was an unneighbourly coldness between the families. Fame, however, spoke so loudly in favour of the youthful Hubert (only son of the knight), that the earl could not avoid a sentiment of envy, more particularly as the only heir to his immense possessions was a daughter.

When Hubert was nineteen, Maud of Durham was only sixteen, and if ever they had seen each other, it was only in those casual encounters that happen among neighbours. One of these occurred at a hunting match, in which both families were engaged; sir Hubert St. Piercy accompanied by his son, and the lord of Berwick, for the first time, by his daughter. Maud, who would not willingly have trodden on the smallest reptile that God hath

created, forbore to draw her bow, until the deer being seen at a distance on a large plain, her father commanded her to try her skill. Maud would fain have excused herself, but her father's manner demanded obedience; she therefore drew her bow, but she looked askaunce, that it might miss the aim. At the same instant young Hubert entered the plain, by leaping a fence at some distance before them, and Maud's arrow was arrested in its flight, and instead of the deer, struck Hubert through the arm. The eye of the maid instantly saw the mischief of her hand, and sending forth a piercing cry, she fell senseless to the ground. All the hunters, in a moment, surrounded the parties. Some raised the lady, and others hastened to assist the youth; but treating the

the business slightly, he himself withdrew the arrow, and entreated no one to suffer alarm, but to give him a bandage to stop the effusion of blood. Maud, somewhat recovered, heard the request, and though naturally as timid as the tender fawn, rushed forward, and snatching off her scarf, presented it to Hubert, with a look which inflicted a deeper wound in his heart, than her arrow had in his arm. This accident spoiled the sport of the day. The earl was fain to return home with his daughter, and sir Hubert, with his son and followers, retook their way to the castle.

This event had no consequence in the family of sir Hubert, who simply considered it as the effect of want of skill in the lady Maud; but her father,

puffed with pride, when surrounded with his partisans, frequently declared, that he regarded it as an omen, that *his daughter* would rise to higher renown, than even *the son* of sir Hubert.

Soon after this a grand tournament was held, at Berwick, in which the youths of the surrounding country endeavoured to signalize themselves by skill and dexterity, and to shew, in breaking a launce for a favourite lady, what they were capable of, should they be attacked by foreign enemies.

The lord of Berwick, with the most noble seniors of the surrounding country, sat on an elevated seat, as umpires; and in gilded galleries, their ladies, with all the youthful beauties within many miles, among whom was Maud, seated by the lady her mother.

All

All prepared, the trumpet sounded, and a tall powerful knight presented himself. The herald of the course, by his order proclaimed, Egbertha of Westmorland, daughter to the earl of that name, the fairest of women, defying all who pretended to the contrary to mortal combat. Two knights successively stood forth and denied the claim; but the contest was not in their favour, for they were speedily overthrown, and in consequence their assertion destroyed.

The force and success of the victor, who was then proudly announced sir Robert of Tweedale, stood unrivalled, when a young knight stepped forward, declaring by the herald, Egbertha of Westmorland, in beauty as inferior to Maud of Berwick, as the twilight of

day is to the splendour of the rising sun. The earl of Berwick was proud to hear his daughter's beauty thus avowed; but the slender, though well-formed body of the knight, who proclaimed it, appeared not equal to a contest with the muscular Robert of Tweedale.

The young adventurer was in white armour, his beaver down, his device, a dove bearing an arrow, and this motto——"*I glory in my wound.*"—Maud alone felt no exultation: like the unassuming lily of the valley, she would, if possible, have concealed her beauty from every eye. The neighing of the steeds, the clattering of the armour, the dashing of the spears, filled her with dread, and pulling her veil lower

lower on her brows, she waited in trembling the issue of the combat.

The white knight pressed hard upon sir Robert, and at length rushed against him with such strength and skill, that he was unhorsed in an instant. The court resounded with shouts of applause; but the stranger, leaping from his horse, and stooping to raise his antagonist, said, "One fall, sir knight, gives no victory; if you are not hurt, remount your horse, I will have a fair conquest or none." Sir Robert rose slowly, and, with sullenness, accepted the offer. Again they attacked each other; and, more guarded than the first time, several strong jostles took place, until at length the white knight a second time unhorsed his opponent. Again the court re-echoed with cries of

applause; but on silence being proclaimed, sir Robert, approaching his antagonist, said, "If, indeed, you are a true and noble knight, give me revenge with the sword: never before have I been thus defeated, twice in one day, therefore hand-to-hand let us try our fortune."

"Willingly," answered the white knight; and drawing his weapon, he added, "had I as many lives as hairs, I would devote them all in this cause."

Powerful as was Robert of Tweedale, he was no match for his opponent, whose want of weight was amply supplied by such exquisite skill that he not only parried his enemy's blows, but kept him so briskly engaged, that at length, fairly exhausted, he was disarmed, and forced to yield.

"Sir

"Sir knight," said sir Robert, "you have conquered nobly, and let me say without boast, that hereafter, as well as now, you may acquire some fame, in having vanquished Robert of Tweedale. What I pray now is, that you would remove your vizor, that should we meet again we may know each other."

"Excuse me," answered the white knight, "hereafter we may be better acquainted. I am young, and must give more meritorious proofs of my courage to deserve the friendship of men, than at so slight a breathing as this."

So saying he presented his hand to the knight, who accepted the offer; then approaching to the seat of the umpires, he received the applause so justly his due.

Turning from them, he presented himself to the ladies, and kneeling at the feet of Maud, laid sir Robert's sword before her.

"Sir knight," said Maud, "I hope you will pardon a simple maid, if she fails in expressing herself in terms your courage demands; but the truth is, I am unskilled on this subject. All warlike weapons scare me, and I had rather be the plainest creature that God did ever form, than that one drop of human blood should be shed on my account."

The knight made no reply, but arose, and bowed to Maud, who timidly raising her eyes as he turned from her, saw on his arm the same scarf she had presented young Hubert on the day of the chace. This, at once, to her discovered the knight;

knight; but he was unknown to all beside, and no one venturing to dispute his assertion of Maud's superiority, the claim was universally allowed.

Whether it was owing to the natural fickleness of man, or that Maud's beauty was irresistible, I know not, but from that day it appears, that Robert of Tweedale gave up all thoughts of Egbertha, and resolved to devote himself to the lord of Durham's daughter, but not to declare his passion, till he had regained the fame he had lost at the tournament.

During an interval of some months that succeeded, a number of lawless robbers found means to land on the lord of Durham's coast, and to carry away whatever they found. The castle was, however, too strongly fortified for them

them to attack, and thus defeated of their first intention, foaming with disappointed rage, they formed the horrid design of setting fire to the whole. For this purpose they threw firebrands over the wall, and a part falling where provender was kept for the horses, that wing of the building was speedily in flames. The confusion this occasioned not only alarmed the inhabitants, but the vassals, and also reached St. Piercy, who collecting his followers, with his son at their head, needless of past enmities, hastened to the succour of his neighbour.

At the sight of such a formidable number of opponents the robbers fled: but all was still anarchy and alarm; for the fire continued to rage, and to redouble the calamity, Maud, whose

apartment

apartment lay on the same side of the castle, was missing. To this all other griefs appeared trifling. The sorrowing mother's cries re-echoed throughout the castle, and dashing herself upon the earth, she called on the battlements to fall and conceal her from the sight of the flames, that were consuming her dear and only child. The lord of Durham's grief, not less poignant, was testified by the offer of half his wealth to him who should save his daughter: but in vain; no one was bold enough to adventure.

In the mean-time the vassals were endeavouring to quench the fire, when on a sudden, ascending a flaming flight of stairs, was seen young Hubert: —rushing through every obstacle, in a few minutes he was lost to their sight. A cry of horror escaped every bosom but

that

that of St. Piercy, who with strained eyes, and outstretched hands, waited in speechless agony the event of his son's generous but daring attempt. A fearful interval ensued; when, on a sudden, Hubert was again discovered, climbing the roof of the castle with Maud in his arms. A few minutes bore them from danger, and a few more, and the agonized parents clasped their daughter in their arms——.

"Half my wealth is yours, valiant youth," said the earl; heretofore we have been, if not enemies, cold friends: I pray ye that in future we may be better acquainted?"

"Thankfully, in my father's name, I receive the latter offer," replied Hubert, "but for the first, noble sir, I decline.——This is the most glorious

day

day of my life, and never shall its honour be tarnished by a hireling's price. Keep your gold and lands, my lord, and happy may you be; but should you lose both, possessed of such a daughter, you will still remain the richest man in Northumberland."

The lord of Durham was a just, though a proud man.—"Young sir," said he, "I canuot brook this obligation; you have saved my daughter, and I insist on your accepting payment of the debt."

"If favoured of Heaven, my lord," returned Hubert modestly, "I have, as you say, saved the lovely Maud, what wealth can pay the obligation?—her worth is above all price."

The lord of Durham contended, but the youth was not to be moved from his resolve; and the fire at length extinguished,

guished, after repeated thanks they separated.

The fame and noble deeds of Hubert St. Piercy after this time appears to have spread round the country. In the cause of honour and distress his sword was ever ready; the bold and zealous defender of his friends, and the scourge of his enemies; the proud oppressor feared him, and the poor and distressed blessed him. His own character, the obligation he had conferred on the lord of Durham, made him no longer a stranger at the castle. That nobleman respected him, his lady regarded him as a son, and Maud loved him, at once, for the estimable qualities of his heart, and the hazard he had made of his own life to save hers.

At this period the wealthy Robert

of

of Tweedale, with a numerous retinue, came to the castle, to ask Maud in marriage, making the most splendid offers in her behalf. His wealth pleased the lord of Durham well, and his family was equally unobjectionable; Maud's consent was therefore alone wanting. But that was not easily obtained; for when pressed by her father, she replied, "My lord, you gave me life, and in all I will obey you, where it can be done consistent with my duty to Heaven and my own conscience; but I should offend both, in giving my hand to Robert of Tweedale. I could not love him beyond all men, as duty commands women to do their husbands, therefore I should offend Heaven; and my conscience would never cease to whisper, that giving my person without

my

my heart, was the act of an harlot, rather than of a modest maid, and utterly unworthy of the family from whence I sprung."

Maud's reply astonished her father. Tractable and obedient to his smallest wishes, he had considered her as a reed that he might bend at pleasure; but this event undeceived him. Neither his persuasions nor anger prevailed. Maud's courage was immoveable; and she concluded with declaring, that sooner than wed the knight of Tweedale, she would devote herself to a religious life in the neighbouring convent. With this answer the knight was dismissed, but in his heart resolved not to give up the pursuit.

Sir Robert's errand was soon spread: it reached Sir Hubert's, and left a dagger

ger in his son's heart. He loved Maud, yet was too poor to hope of gaining the consent of her father, therefore could not hear of so powerful a rival without dread. Resolved, however, not to bear the torture of suspence, he in melancholy mood took his way to the castle. Maud was alone in the hall. Hubert accosted her with affection mingled with fear, and after some preliminary discourse, ventured to say, "You have had a gallant visitor: Robert of Tweedale is a brave knight: for the first time in my life I envy him the possession of wealth."

"What could wealth procure you," said Maud, "that you do not already possess? You have a good father, who, if not rich, has enough to procure all the comforts of life. You have strength and

and courage to defend your possessions, and a heart that will never increase them by rapine or violence. Are not such blessings wealth — what would you more?"

"Ah, Maud," returned Hubert, "I would have riches sufficient to purchase a jewel, the want of which makes all all other blessings appear poor."

"Alas! no gold can reach its worth; but I fear the power of persuasion — perhaps inclination—" hesitated he.

"Surely the jewel you speak of is not a woman's heart," replied she.

"And what jewel, fair Maud, so estimable as an uncorrupted heart?"

"I am no judge; but surely if it is to be purchased with gold, it cannot be called uncorrupted. For my part," continued she timidly, "I would be

loved for myself alone : riches or grandeur shall have no sway with me."

Hubert's satisfaction at this answer you may readily conceive. — " Ah, Maud," said he, " if Robert of Tweedale doth not win your hand, I care not if he possessed the riches of the whole world."

" That then he never will," replied she, blushing. " I will never wed without my father's consent; but my affections are not in my own power; they are bestowed on a virtuous youth, and time and Heaven will dispose all for the best."

" One word more, fair Maud, and make me most blessed, or most miserable of men," said Piercy.

" Not one:—remember what is due

to

to me, and I shall not forget what is due to the preserver of my life—the gallant Hubert St. Piercy." So saying she left the hall, without giving him time to reply.

Soon after this a dreadful sickness broke out in the vicinity. The lord of Durham and his lady were attacked with the malady, their servants sunk around them, and on the lovely Maud fell the first care of attending them. Day and night she watched them with increasing duty, offering up the most fervent prayers for their recovery, and making a solemn vow, that if they were spared to her wishes, to offer at the altar of the Holy Virgin, a chalice of pure gold, of the weight of four pounds. Her pious prayers were heard; her parents slowly recovered, and charmed

with

with her duty and affection, vowed to present to the Virgin a similar offering, but of double weight.

The preparations for this ceremony and thanksgiving were noised throughout the country, and people flocked from all parts to witness the solemnity. The chapel was prepared, the walls within were covered with vases of flowers, and the altar loaded with the rich gifts of pilgrims, penitents, and pious donors. The priests were cloathed in their richest apparel, the incense smoaked from golden censors, and the harmonious voices of the singers, mingled with music, resounded through the vaulted roof. The procession was composed of the nobility of the whole country, preceded by virgins strewing flowers; then came Maud, unadorned,

save by maiden loveliness and modesty, cloathed in a white garment, and bearing in her hands the chalice filled with the most costly spices. Next came the lord of Durham and his lady, bearing with silken cords each a handle of a larger golden cup, and followed by the nobility in pairs, and lastly by their vassals and domestics, in new liveries richly decorated.

On reaching the chapel, high mass was sung, after which Maud approached the altar, and humbly kneeling, deposited her gift. Next came the lord and lady of Durham, placing their offering by that of Maud. The music then resounded, and a solemn thanksgiving was made for the restored health of the lord of the domain. The ceremony concluded, the earl, taking his daughter

ter by the hand, said, "Heaven, my child, hath witnessed thy piety and duty, thy unwearied attention to thy parents, and thy nightly and daily prayers for their restoration: but here, to testify my approbation of thy worth, in the face of men and angels, I solemnly vow to grant at this altar whatever request thou shalt demand: make it therefore; I stand ready to confirm thy wishes, even to the half of my domain."

If the piety of Maud had charmed every one, the grateful acknowledgement of her father had equal weight, and all in silent expectation waited her answer.

"My lord and father," replied she, "you put too dangerous a trust in a weak maid, who fears to wish what

might be obnoxious to her tender parents."

"It cannot be," answered he, "speak without fear; my word is pledged, I will not break it." Again all was silent.—Maud paused awhile, then said, "Since my honoured father thus presses me, I will speak; but still under the restriction of his better judgment. First, then," continued she, her eyes cast down, and her face dyed with blushes, if my lord should ever wish his Maud to wed, that it may be only to the man to whom, next himself, she owes most obligation; secondly," added she, "that if this request doth not meet his good pleasure, he would permit his daughter to remain near him and her mother, to watch their age with tenderness and affection,

affection, and when time shall have fulfilled their period here on earth, and their honoured remains be gathered unto their fathers, should she have the sorrow to outlive them, she may be permitted to found a religious house, and devote herself to Heaven."

As Maud spoke, a taper that was on high, burning before the shrine of St. Margaret, fell on the light veil which flowed loosely round her, and set it on fire; but which, without injury, was suddenly extinguished. — "The saint adopts the lady Maud with sacred fire," said the priest — "her pious wishes are registered on high."

Maud trembled. She cast her eyes on Hubert, who, with glowing expectation in his features, stood foremost in the throng that surrounded her. Her

father had not replied, but seized this interval of silence; for though he held religion in the utmost reverence, yet he wished to transmit his name to posterity. "'Tis true, child," said he, "that I had wished for thee a richer match than Hubert St. Piercy, for certainly to him thou owest most, and thy heart directs thee there.—In this case thy wishes shall lead mine. Half my wealth is by right his, and to that I will add the hand of Maud of Durham, whenever he shall claim it."

Hubert, in an instant, was at the earl's feet, and clasping his garment, excess of pleasure rendered him speechless.

"Rise, my son," said the earl, "'tis true thou art not rich in gold or lands, but true worth surpasses both, and that even thy enemies cannot deny thee."

My

"My lord," replied Hubert, "I have not words to thank you, but if the affection of a son, mingled with the obedience of the most humble of your vassals, can in any measure repay your goodness, how shall I glory in testifying it.——And you, fair Maud," continued he, addressing her, "who have deigned to honour me so far beyond what I dared to hope, I here pledge myself, by all my hopes of happiness hereafter, that as you are my first, so shall you ever be my only love."

As he concluded, the earl joined their hands, and murmurs of applause and satisfaction were heard from every side. The parting benediction was then given, and all retired to their respective homes.

CHAP. VII.

The Legend of Maud of Berwick and Hubert St. Piercy, continued.

AMONG the numerous spectators that attended at the chapel, not one departed with fuch feelings as Robert of Tweedale, who, attracted by curiosity, and to feast his eyes on Maud, had been present during the whole ceremony. Disappointed love, pride, and vengeance, raged in his bosom, and he resolved to sacrifice fame, honour, conscience, and all that renders life desirable, rather than suffer St. Piercy to wed the maid for whom he languished.

While all was anarchy in the bosom of

of sir Robert, all was peace and harmony in the families of Durham and St. Piercy. Hubert saw Maud every day, and each visit endeared him to the earl and his countess, until at length the marriage was fixed to take place in a month. Hubert heard the time appointed with rapture; Maud with modest reserve acquiesced, and exchanging rings, the contract was signed.

All now was preparation for the marriage. Sir Hubert exulted in his son's happiness, and the earl could not but wonder, that he had been so long blind to the virtues of St. Piercy. The dark mind of Robert of Tweedale was alone plotting revenge, and devising means how to dash the cup of happiness from Hubert's lips. To meet him openly as man to man, he feared: he had expe-

rienced his skill and dexterity three years before; and now ripened by time, and his limbs knit with manly strength, to attack him was a daring beyond his courage. Yet to lurk like a fell assasin, was an act against which his heart at first recoiled; but by degrees familiarised with the idea, he finally resolved rather to take the life of Hubert, than suffer him to wed Maud.

On the eve of the marriage, as Hubert bade Maud farewell for the night, doubtless deeming it the last he should be divided from her, as she withdrew her hand from his, she perceived the ring he had presented her at the contract broken in twain.——"Oh! Hubert," said she trembling, and stretching out her hand, "behold thy ring! it is broken,—what may this mean?"

"Gold

"Gold may break, Maud," answered he, "but my faith to thee will never bend. My happiness is indeed so great, that I can scarcely believe it real, but should ought intervene between us, remember that the love of thee will be only extinguished with the last spark of my life."

Maud sighed: she thought Hubert looked pale. Twice she called him back; she laid her hand on his. "Hubert" said she, "my heart is oppressed, my blood is cold in my veins: a fearful dread, which I cannot express, hangs over me."

Hubert endeavoured to reassure her, and at length in some measure succeeded; then bidding her farewell, attended by his followers, he left the castle.

Maud's fears had not, however, subsided. In the lonely quiet of her chamber they recurred with redoubled force; in the whistling of the wind, she thought she heard voices; and the nocturnal note of the owl filled her with dread.

After a restless night she arose at break of day. The morning was dark and lowring, and snow covered the face of the earth. Still was her heart heavy; but the bridal virgins coming to dress her, she endeavoured to conceal her anxiety. At noon the marriage was to take place, and at eleven the bridegroom, attended by a brilliant and numerous train, was expected. The hour arrived and passed, but the bridegroom came not:—Maud's fears increased beyond all sufferance; but the earl, vexed at the apparent slight put upon his daughter,

daughter, treated her fears with contempt.

At length, stretching his beast to its utmost speed, a messenger was seen hastening to the castle. He came to bring Hubert's bridal robes, and to chide him from his father, for his neglecting to come with the procession, which had waited his appearance till past the appointed hour. The alarm now spread from Maud to her parents. The earl himself questioned the messenger, and learned, that at early dawn St. Piercy had risen, and speaking only to a trusty domestic, had informed him, that he was going to the lord of Durham's castle, as he was anxious to see the lady Maud, whom he had left under some uneasiness the night before; but that he should return at the appointed

pointed time: and finally, that he went on horseback, followed only by a large dog, who usually attended him.

The alarm was now become general, as there was no doubt but that some fatal accident had befallen Hubert, and messengers were dispatched in every direction, in order, if possible, to gain intelligence, but in vain. The day passed in trembling expectation, all fearing the worst, yet dreading to hear it realized. The preparations for the marriage were forgotten, the lady Maud, in her bridal robes, sat in a chair, pale, wan, and motionless, until evening; when suddenly the barking of a dog at the door of the hall attracted her attention.—"It is Hubert's dog!" exclaimed she, rushing forward to the entrance, but as suddenly recoiling, with a fearful

a fearful and death-like countenance; for by the light of the torches she discovered that the dog's white and shaggy coat was dyed with blood. Speechless with horror, she again sunk into a chair: the dog advanced towards her, bearing something in his mouth which he laid at her feet. Lost in grief, Maud at first perceived it not; but her father stooping, what was his terror and affright, to behold a human hand, and on examining it nearer to discover it was Hubert's, too surely identified by the ring of contract which still remained on his finger. Nature, stretched beyond the power of further suffering, relieved the feelings of Maud by insensibility, in which state she was removed to her chamber.

The earl, as soon as his first alarm had

had subsided, ordered all his vassals to join those of sir Hubert's in the search of St. Piercy's body, as no doubt now remained but that he was murdered; and after a night, during which no one attempted to retire to rest, the earl himself resolved to join in the search, taking with him the faithful beast, that had apparently witnessed his master's misfortune.

The snow had disappeared from the earth, the morning was clear, and the earl and his followers resolved to let the dog lead the way. He moved slowly, entered the forest that separated the estates, and with his nose to the ground, he took the road to the mountains, and at length entered the Cave of St. Margaret, halting at the opening, where

where he uttered the most hideous howls.

The earl shuddered.—His men drew back—but awed and animated by their lord's example, they at length (having procured torches) followed him; and, dreadful to relate, in one of the windings of the cavern, discovered the mangled body of the gallant Hubert, pierced with seven mortal stabs, beside the loss of his hand.

The body was conveyed to the castle, where the two mourning fathers joined in paying it every possible honour, while the countess, added to her own grief, had the melancholy prospect of seeing her only child sinking with sorrow, that she could neither alleviate nor remove. The body of St. Piercy being

being found afforded Maud a gloomy satisfaction, and to weep with sir Hubert, appeared to give her the only relief she was capable of feeling.

For a year after this melancholy event no discovery was made of the murderers. The castle of the earl, as well as the dwelling of sir Hubert, was hung with black; no visitors were admitted within the walls, and Maud never left her chamber, but to assist at the masses, which were repeated daily for the repose of the soul of her lover. One night that she had retired from the chapel to her apartment, her mind as usual full of the disastrous death of Hubert, in her sleep she thought the sad tragedy of the dog entering with the human hand was renewed; but instead of laying it as before,

fore, at her feet, he laid it at those of sir Robert of Tweedale. The idea of sir Robert being Hubert's enemy had never before intruded itself on her imagination, but the thought once awakened, it hourly gained strength, and she had scarcely patience to wait until morning, to communicate her suspicions to her father and sir Hubert. Neither, however, gave credit to her dream, but strove all in their power to divert her mind from the supposition.

Some months after this a messenger one morning arrived at the castle from sir Robert of Tweedale, requesting the favour of an audience of the lord of Durham. The entreaty was so pressing that he did not refuse. Sir Robert being admitted, after some preliminary discourse, expressed his concern at the

sorrows

sorrows that he understood had fallen on the lovely Maud, begged to remind the earl of his former proposal, and hoped that his daughter, when time should have softened her grief, would suffer him to endeavour to supply the place of the unfortunate Hubert in her heart.

"Sir knight," said the earl, "I will deceive no man. My daughter, I am convinced, will never marry: Hubert living, and Hubert dead, alone possesses her heart."

At that moment a noise among the domestics disturbed the conversation in the hall, and the earl calling his page to know the cause, was informed, that it arose from the lady Maud's dog (for Hubert's dog had ever since his death remained with her) having seized one

of

of sir Robert's servants by the throat, and that so strongly, that he could not be removed. The earl, followed by sir Robert, went immediately to call him off; but they no sooner entered the apartment, than the dog suddenly changed his object, and loosing the servant, fastened upon sir Robert.

All now was confusion; neither blows nor the soothings of the earl would make him loose his hold. One of the domestics at length observed, that the lady Maud had most power over him, and if she would condescend to sooth him he would doubtless obey. Sir Robert, half strangled, was sinking with terror; but by his raised hands entreated assistance; for he feared to make the smallest struggle, lest the exasperated

asperated animal should give him instant death.

The earl commanded Maud to be called. She obeyed; but was no sooner informed of the cause, than her dream recurred fresh to her memory, and throwing off the fear that such a scene occasioned, she exclaimed,—"On my life, my lord and father, the dog holds a murderer, and never shall my voice call him off, till he makes signs of confession; no, sooner will I suffer him to tear out his false throat, than by a word save the murderer of my beloved and betrothed husband."

Sir Robert made signs of denial; but the servant, struck with remorse, cried aloud, "It is too true, blood will have blood; sir Robert, myself, and two more, murdered the youthful Hubert

St.

St. Piercy, and concealed his body in a cave in the forest."

"Observe this well," said Maud firmly, turning to the domestics; "say yet who employed thee?"

"Sir Robert of Tweedale; and though I pay with my life the forfeiture, yet I have relieved my soul by the confession."

"You have done well," she answered; "Heaven pardon your heinous sins." Then calling off the dog, he speedily relinquished his hold.

The earl recovering his first surprize, exclaimed, "I arrest you, Robert of Tweedale, on the charge of murder, nor will I lose sight of you, until I deliver you into the hand of justice."

"To you, my lord, I now leave the guidance of this affair, satisfied that you

you will act with the rectitude that has ever distinguished you."

So saying, Maud left the hall, and the earl and his domestics secured sir Robert and his followers, and sent them to Berwick.

Sir Robert, hardened in guilt, denied all knowledge of the fact; but his man firmly persisted in the first accusation, adding, that the villains who assisted had retired to the north of Scotland, but he knew not where, and now subsisted by the liberality of their master.

The day of trial approached. Whatever were the internal feelings of Sir Robert, he bore all boldly: not so the penitent domestic; he wept day and night, and inflicted on himself the most severe penances, so that, weakened by abstinence, and tortured with the

the pangs of guilt and repentance, even the night before the trial his soul was called to its dread account, for he was found dead when his keeper entered his cell to bring him before the tribunal.

This accident was vexatious to the prosecutors, but a welcome event to sir Robert, as his servant was the only witness against him. The judges allowed that the suspicions were strong: but there was no positive proof; for the servant had taken no oath of the murder, and he might have accused his master from ill-will, or some sinister motive. Sir Robert also set up a plea, that his man was subject to fits of insanity, and produced three of his creatures to prove the truth of the assertion. As to the dog seizing the knight and his man, it was held as a circumstance on

which no dependance was to be placed, as dogs were known to have antipathies to particular persons. In short, the event of the trial was, that sir Robert was liberated, and vice triumphed. Sir Hubert St. Piercy, severely wounded by the release of his son's murderer, though himself past the strength of youth, determined to seek revenge, and regardless of the prowess of his adversary, defied him to mortal combat. Sir Robert was naturally bold, but could he with honour have declined the challenge, he would undoubtedly have done so; but as that was not to be effected, he submitted with apparent resolution.

The gentle Maud, and the earl her father, would fain have persuaded St. Piercy to leave vengeance to Heaven, and

and not to put a life, so precious as his, in competition with that of a murderer. Sir Hubert was, however, not to be moved from his purpose, and the day being appointed, and the judges met, the parties prepared for combat. Robert of Tweedale spoke first: he talked loudly of his innocence, and threatened to punish his accusers; and, turning with derision to sir Hubert, said, he was ashamed of meeting so impotent a foe, but that old men, like children, required punishment, when they refused to hearken to reason.

Sir Hubert St. Piercy next addressed the judges and spectators. His beneficent, though mournful features, shaded with grey hairs, moved them at once to pity and reverence.——"My friends and fellow-countrymen," said he, "you

see before you an old man, rendered childless by fraud and villainy. If I fall in this just cause I shall die with honour, and hope to rejoin my son in that country, where no fell assassin shall ever intrude. If I conquer, as I feel a firm belief I shall, it will be a just tribute to the manes of my gallant Hubert, and weary of the world and sorrow, I will retire into a monastery to end my days.——Come on, then," continued he, in a voice that interested all, and sunk deep into sir Robert's heart, " a power stronger than mine strikes through my arm; in this cause I would defy an army such as thee.—Behold, I wield the sword of my slaughtered son, nor shall it know a scabbard, till it hath drank the blood of the villain who slew him."

Sir

Sir Hubert's speech was followed by so powerful an attack, that his words appeared prophetic; for the armour of sir Robert was broken like glass, and the sword of Hubert found an easy passage to his guilty breast.—"Hold!" exclaimed he, sinking on the earth, "I yield; thou sayest truly, a power greater than thine, guides thy arm—— spare me—I am already wounded unto death."

"I will not spare thee, villain," answered sir Hubert, "unless thou confess; therefore if thy false lips can utter truth, speak; if not, thou shalt die with the lie in thy throat."

So saying, sir Hubert prepared to give him a mortal blow; but sir Robert cried aloud, "Spare me, I conjure you spare me: let me not die with-

out shrift. My soul is so deeply laden with sin, that hell, with all its horrors, will receive me."

"Say, then, didst thou not slay my son, the brave Hubert St. Piercy?"

Sir Robert groaned.——"My own hand gave him but one wound; but too sure I caused him to be slain."

"For what fell purpose could thy dark mind devise so foul a deed? My generous Hubert never injured thee."

"The fatal beauty of Maud of Durham was the cause.——Now, I pray you, give me assistance to stay my soul until a priest be called—I will confess all."

"Be it so," answered sir Hubert; "but remember, I will have every secret from thy false heart. Where are the

the villains that assisted thee in this black deed?"

"At my castle at Strathnairne. Pray ye give me help—I shall bleed to death."

"Thou hast lived like a villain, and now diest like a coward," said sir Hubert; then calling assistance, he ordered him to be conveyed to a couch, and a skillful leech to attend, and look at his wound.

The leech assuaged the effusion of blood; but declared, to the best of his belief, the wounds were mortal. A priest was then called, and sir Robert made a full avowal of the murder. He confessed, that he engaged three men, one of whom was the servant lately dead: that two were constantly em-

ployed, during the last month, to watch some opportunity to slay Hubert; but that as he was always accompanied, they found it impossible. On the evening preceding the day on which he was to wed the lady Maud, he had himself joined his men, two of whom were skilful archers, and in case no other opportunity offered, they were from the covert of the wood to draw their bows against Hubert, as at the head of the procession he went to the castle. This arrangement was, however, rendered fruitless, by his riding out on the morning appointed for his marriage. On discovering him to be alone, sir Robert accosted him: he told him "to relinquish Maud or die," Hubert answered haughtily, that sir Robert must give better proofs of his skill than he had hitherto

therto done for him to fear him; that he was willing to meet him hand to hand, as a man, and could not suppose he meant to attack him like an assassin. That had he twenty lives, he would venture them all sooner than yield an atom of his love to Maud. As he spoke he drew his sword; but one of the villains at that moment stabbed him in the side, though not mortally, for even after that he fought manfully, till another of the assassins, with a heavy stroke of the broad-sword, at one blow severed his arm at the wrist. He was then soon dispatched, and his body dragged into the forest for concealment, and deposited in the cave, as was also his hand. That the dog at the first greatly annoyed them, and bit sir Robert severely; but that on pur-

suing him, he ran with so much swiftness into the wood that they could not reach him, and they feared to follow further lest they should be discovered.

Sir Robert then declared the name of the men who were concerned in the murder, and officers of justice were sent to apprehend them.

When this news reached Maud, she made a public thanksgiving, and the body of her lover being found in St. Margaret's Cave, corresponding in her idea with the event of the taper falling from the shrine of that saint, she resolved to consider her as her patroness, and when in her power to testify her gratitude.

In the mean time sir Robert's wounds, which had been deemed mortal, to the surprise

surprise of all began to heal. His servants were taken, and put to the torture confessed the fact. Sir Robert, on the contrary, as he gained strength, would fain have denied the whole transaction; but the confessions were now too strongly authenticated to be denied, and he only escaped death by his wounds to lose his life ignominiously on the scaffold. The knight being tried and condemned, was, with the other criminals, put to death, near the spot where they committed the murder.

Sir Robert was first despoiled of his ensigns of honour by the common executioner, his military girdle was ungirded, his sword taken away, his spurs cut off with an hatchet, his gauntlets plucked off, and the escutcheon of his arms reversed. He was then with the

others scourged, after which they were strangled, their bodies burnt, their ashes scattered to the wind, and their goods given to the poor. Such was the death of the murderers. Soon after which Maud, by the consent of her parents, founded a convent to the honour of St. Margaret, and also a chapel, on the spot where Hubert was slain, endowing it richly, and causing perpetual masses to be said for his eternal repose. For the souls of the murderers no one prayed, and from the fearful screams and howlings that were frequently heard in the forest and adjoining mountains, the dreadful prognostic was drawn, that their sinful spirits were wandering in woeful jeopardy for their earthly crimes. Where their ashes fell the land became barren,

ren, and a stone cross was erected to mark the spot where they suffered, that travellers might avoid it.

With pious duty the gentle Maud attended her parents, and sir Hubert, whom she regarded as a father, till their death, after which she retired to the convent she had founded. She erected a magnificent monument to the memory of her lover, and ordered that, after her death, her own should be placed by his side; and to preserve to posterity the remembrance of the fidelity of the dog, commanded that his effigy should be placed at her feet.

* * * * *

"Such," continued Alice, "is the received legend of Maud of Durham and Hubert St. Piercy. The length of the

the tale has beguiled us, for the moon is rising, and we must hasten home."

"I would our dear Austin was returned," said Margaret. "This tragic tale has thrown a gloom on my spirits. I trust he will arrive safe."

"A poor priest has nothing to tempt the cupidity of robbers," answered Alice; "and the father is universally beloved by all who know him."

"Heaven prosper him," added David; "the loss of my honoured lord did hardly affect me more, than would now the loss of him.——With your permission I will attend you to the gate, for it is too late for you to go alone."

Margaret and Alice accepted the offer, and leaving the chapel they speedily reached the castle.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

As Margaret, with Alice entered the gate, De Launcy passed them. His brows were knit with a frown; but he was too much accustomed to a court, not to know how to regulate his features according to existing circumstances. "Who would not be a priest," said he sarcastically, "when hair-cloth and a cowl, in the eyes of beauty, possess charms beyond gold and velvet; and a dreary, damp, and melancholy cell, present more allurements, than splendid apartments and the comforts of wealth."

"Gold and velvet, splendid apartments, and wealth, will leave the heart

but

but cold, if they have no appendages,"
answered Alice.

"And those appendages the friar doubtless possesses?" replied De Launcy.

"He does: he is pious, gentle, unintruding, and humble."

"Allowing even his other virtues, I should be strongly tempted to dispute his *humility*," said De Launcy. "He assumes, indeed, the sanctified tone of the priesthood, but when offended, his eyes sparkle with pride, and his words, were they not checked, would evidently express the same."

"Perhaps so," answered Margaret; "but as dame Alice and I never have offended him, we never called forth his rebuke."

"I unfortunately did," said De Launcy, "though unintentionally.——

But

But to banish a disagreeable subject, will you honour me to-night with your company at supper?"

"I thank you, but wish to retire," answered Margaret. So saying, with a slight courtesy, she passed him, and retired to her apartment.

On the following day Austin returned from Berwick. His fears on Leopold's account were decreased; nor did Margaret and Alice fail to share his satisfaction, for though the youth was unknown to them, gratitude interested them in his safety.

Little alteration happened in the usual order of the castle for a fortnight. Margaret debarred herself from seeing Austin as frequently as usual, in order to escape the persecution of De Launcy, and the father daily expected the return

of

of Leopold, when he was one evening greatly surprised by some information he received from David: it was, that the lord De Launcy, accompanied only by a few followers, had that afternoon arrived at the castle; that they came from London, and were to be followed by the baroness in a few days. The cause of this sudden appearance was, the messenger that Richard De Launcy had sent in pursuit of his father, with information of the secret he had discovered, finding the lord and lady De Launcy in London, had no occasion to go further.

Guilty minds are soon alarmed; lady De Launcy vowed revenge against the innocent victim of her avarice, and her husband, who saw his favourite plan thus half frustrated, by a sharer in the

baron

baron Fitzwalter's property, resolved to use his utmost endeavours to prevent it. As the step that Richard De Launcy had taken was unknown to all but himself, and those immediately concerned, the unexpected return of his father caused much surprise. Austin resolved to lose no time after the lady's arrival in asserting Margaret's right. Alice remembered with a disgust, which her piety softened, the affronts formerly offered to her young charge; but for Margaret herself, now assured of her mother's honour, she felt the firmness of an upright mind unjustly persecuted, and considered her oppressors, at once, as objects of pity and contempt. Lord De Launcy on his arrival had a long private interview with his son, in which the youth probably

bably revealed his passion for Margaret; for his father was heard to speak loud and angrily, and to forbid him thinking on some subject that had apparently engaged his attention.

On the following morning breakfast was no sooner over, than lord De Launcy sent for Margaret and Alice, assuming on the occasion all the pride and consequence he was accustomed to use to his vassals and court dependents.

Margaret entered, accompanied by the dame. Her person and demeanour astonished him, and for a moment he almost held his son excusable; but resuming his consequence, he said:

"I unwillingly take upon me a task that, was lady De Launcy here, I should be spared.—To the disgrace of the memory of the late baron Fitzwalter, he

he bred you as his legitimate child; the kindness of his widow continued that weakness, and now, in requital for those benefits, you endeavour to plot with a crazy priest and an old woman, to sting with base calumnies the friends that have nurtured you.—— As I would, if possible, save you from disgrace and shame, I have thought fit to condescend, to expostulate with you, that should you continue in this willfulness, you may hereafter reflect, that I have, by this notice, acquitted myself of my duty toward you."

Margaret's temper had never before been so much moved as by this speech: the crimson of anger glowed on her face, and conquered her usual diffidence.—— "My lord," answered she, "I thank

"I thank you, that you have, as you say, saved the lady De Launcy the trouble of reprimanding me, as from you I bear reproof more easily, being in no degree of consanguinity with my father.—My father, my lord, suffered no disgrace by educating his daughter within his own walls; the disgrace would have been to banish an unoffending child from them: and for the lady De Launcy, I thank her for every favour I have received through her means. For plotting with a priest, if you allude to father Austin, he will never stoop to any dishonourable act. —His piety is too well established for the breath of calumny to wound him; and for his senses they are as perfect as mine, or yours, my lord. He was the valued and beloved friend of my father:

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in my infancy he taught me to regard him as himself; and now that time has made him more known to me, my heart and conscience revere the distinction, and lead me to honour and respect him above all men. For dame Alice, my second parent, her deeds better bespeak her than my words; and I should blush in her presence, to acknowledge the extent of her worth, though I shall never shrink to confess my obligations to her."

"At least, young maid, you are well tutored," answered De Launcy, "but, observe, I am master here, and strictly forbid you to hold any communication whatever with that hypocrite Austin. And for you, woman," continued he, addressing Alice, "regard my words, and let them not be forgotten: you are

too

too aged to seek a fresh asylum, and my house shall shelter no one to plot against its honour."

"Turn us forth together, my lord," said Margaret, "I will never know a home that dame Alice does not share.—Great God!" continued she in an agony she could not suppress, "have I lived to hear the woman, whose maternal kindness nurtured my mother at her breast; the woman my honoured father respected as a parent; and who has been the stay and safeguard of my youth, threatened with being driven out from those walls where she deserves nothing but reverence,"

"Be calm, my dear child," said the venerable Alice, "the warmth of your temper carries you too far. My lord De Launcy threatens only those who

plot

plot against his honour, which cannot be a weak woman like myself, who by age will soon be called to her great account, and therefore will neither lie for honour nor profit. As to parting us, that can never take place; for though God hath placed you high, and me low, yet have you been to me as a daughter, and we will never separate. Your noble father, who was pleased to respect me above my merits, has provided against it, even in the contract of his second marriage, and no power can remove me from you, without my own consent, except by a violation of all laws, both human and divine."

The apparent mildness of Margaret, and the pious resignation of Alice, had led De Launcy to suppose they would tremble at his frown, and give up any

intention, so ill supported as theirs necessarily must be; he was therefore astonished at the firmness of the one, and the calmness of the other, and resolving to take more mature council with his own heart, he bid them consider of what he had said, and dismissed them.

In the mean time David, who never failed to procure of his old comrades information of what was passing at the castle, was apprised, that a dissension of some kind had taken place between the lord De Launcy and the lady Margaret, and that, in consequence, he had ordered his men not to suffer her to pass beyond the outer gate. Though they were unacquainted with the subject of the dispute, it was easily surmised by David, who hastened to Austin to communicate his intelligence.

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The friar heard him with attention.—"The crisis draws near," replied he, "and the spirit of Fitzwalter, from the depth of the tomb, calls upon me to protect his child—no selfish motive shall prevent me. Even at the foot of the throne will I cry for justice; and if Henry can refuse the claim of an oppressed orphan, woe be to England that shudders under such a ruler."

"The king cannot refuse to hear a daughter of the lord Fitzwalter," said David, "and though the baron De Launcy be a favourite, yet truth must stand above falsehood."

"I meant, in case her right was disputed, to have sent her to Germany till the event was known," returned Austin;" but the lord De Launcy appears prepared to baffle that project. My

breast swells with apprehension for her safety; yet I think they dare not attempt to do her personal injury."

"Heaven forbid they should," replied David; "then, indeed, would the measure of their iniquities be full."

"I will, in dispite of all, go to the castle to-morrow," said Austin; "but Margaret's claim I think best discussed in lady De Launcy's presence. Leopold, whom I now expect daily, shall hasten to Germany for the confession, and the event we must leave to the justice of our cause."

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

On the following morning Austin, as he had purposed, went to the castle. One of the lord De Launcy's men attended at the gate, and refused him admittance to Margaret. In vain were his expostulations, the domestic told him he only obeyed his lord's commands, and his dismissal would ensue should he disregard them. Austin then requested to see the lord De Launcy; but this was likewise refused, and, with heaviness of heart, he at length returned to his cell.

Two days after, attended by a splendid train, arrived the lady De Launcy. Her lord had been hastily

recalled from the Continent, and Isabel, being at some distance from them, had been left behind.

Allowing her one day for repose, Austin repaired to the castle, and demanded to be admitted to a private audience, and after some difficulty obtained his request. The lady received him with affected composure, while her lord, assuming a forced dignity, said,—"I have condescended to see you, friar, in order to end those base machinations, that I am well aware have been forming ever since the baron Fitzwalter's death. For what purpose *you* can wish to pass Margaret on the world for ought than she truly is, I know not: if she had claims, why did not her father avow them?"

"Guided by the strictest honour, it

"was

was his firm intent to do so," returned Austin, "had not death snatched him untimely away. The day preceding his decease in his cabinet was his will; not indeed entirely finished, but in it was expressed his intention concerning Margaret, her guardians nominated, and also those of the lady Isabel.—The lady Blanch Fitzwalter's confession was annexed to the will with the baron's own seal——"

"It is too much, before me, to give that name to Blanch Stanley," interrupted the lady De Launcy; "but, friar, are you aware, that if even that was true, I have a mortgage in full over half the estate?"

"You have," answered Austin; and I am also aware, that at the time of Fitzwalter's death, in his cabinet

there was to the amount of six thousand marks, and also various rich jewels, which by his will he ordered for sale, to pay the mortgage you possess. Two-thirds of his estate were then left to Margaret, and the remainder to Isabel, as he had no doubt you would make her portion equal to her sister's. —This, lady, I will swear in the face of Heaven, and by my hopes of salvation.——Pardon me,—you also know my assertion true: for the love then of your own soul, act uprightly. Blessed with health, and surrounded with splendour, your feelings now may be dormant; but when awakened with pain, and the grave is yawning to receive you, the palliative gloss with which you now consider your deeds will disappear. I ask nothing without

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the clearest proof, though you have proof sufficient.——You blush, lady.—I joy to see it.—Your conscience, I trust, is not dead to the voice of truth."

"Hypocritical villain!" exclaimed De Launcy, "know you in whose presence you stand, and to whom you speak?"

"I do," replied Austin, for a moment anger overcoming his usual forbearance, "I speak to the lord De Launcy, so made by the favour of Henry the Seventh, and his wife, the daughter of Edward Mountford."

"Insolent, and who art thou?" said the lady De Launcy, "reply to that if thou darest?"

"A poor priest," answered Austin.—"When it truly concerns you to

know more, you shall be informed—In the mean time rest assured, that Margaret *shall* have justice; for I will proclaim her wrongs aloud, and carry them even to the foot of the throne."

"Thou," replied De Launcy, contemptuously, "thou to the presence of king Henry. Poor priest! thy head is indeed wrong; such as thee are not admitted even into his meanest hall."

"I grieve to hear it," replied Austin, patiently: "if every heart around the king was as true to his interest as mine, then would he be the most happy of all monarchs."

"Begone," answered De Launcy, "we have already wasted too much time on such a thing as thee. Observe me well;—come here no more: and should Margaret continue in her folly, with

with disgrace will I turn her from these gates; therefore seek not her ruin."

"Send her forth, my lord," returned Austin. "Great as you deem your rank, she has an earthly friend still greater than you; and one in heaven, who knowing the justice of her cause will never forsake her."

"Once more I bid thee begone, lest I call my lackeys to drive thee from my presence," said lord De Launcy.

"One word, and I leave you.—— Margaret was in health and safety when you returned, and such will I claim her from your hands." So saying he left the apartment.

On his return he found David awaiting him. The spirits of both were oppressed, and in mournful contemplation they passed the time in the cha-

pel, till towards evening, when the sound of steps in the cloisters attracted their attention.

"Some one approaches," said Austin; but before he could proceed, a voice re-echoed through the arches, "What, ho! father Austin!—If ye are here, speak.——It is your friend Leopold!"

"Blessed be that voice!" replied Austin, starting forward to meet him, "Welcome are you as plenty after famine; my heart has languished to see you."

"Father," answered the youth, "my stay, I hope, will prove a token of future duty. Indeed I have long been able to return, but the friars would not suffer me, and inforced my

 obedience

obedience by repeating your commands."

"They did well, for in truth you are pale and thin; but I trust youth, and a natural good constitution, will soon re-establish your health."

"I am well, father,—quite well.—My respected friend, David, I rejoice to see you in health. But say, how doth all at the castle."

"Indeed I scarcely know. The lord De Launcy and his wife are returned.——Margaret is a prisoner, or little better; for I am not permitted to see her.——I this day asserted her claim before her mother-in-law. It was not allowed; and nothing now remains, but to make the demand publicly: in the mean time I tremble for her safety.——Would to Heaven I had

sent

sent her to Bremen, on the lady Adelaide's invitation."

"She would indeed have been safe," returned Leopold; but is there no way of rescuing her from the grasp of her oppressors—Observe, father, I am quite recovered, and have a heart as willing as my body is strong, to attempt whatever you command."

"There is nothing to attempt, my generous youth," returned Austin; "it would be courting unavailing danger. I can easily judge your courage; but what can one man against many? No, Leopold, we have nothing but patience and a reliance on Providence. You shall go to Germany, and procure the paper from the Abbess; and we must then bring the business to an issue as speedily as possible."

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"With the lady Margaret in danger during the interval, father—?"

"I would it were otherwise; but it is unavoidable."

"I am unknown, father, by all—can no means then be devised, to employ me in her service?"

"None—On her, I think, they dare not exercise their cruelty, as I have assured them they will be called to account; but for a stranger discovered acting against them, no mercy would be shewn."

"You are too cautious, father. Life is only estimable as it is useful. Of what value is a jewel locked up in a casket, or a light burning in a dead man's tomb?—In a virtuous cause, methinks, I could brave all dangers; for what armour so strong as an applauding conscience,

conscience, and the certainty of truth on our side?"

"Leopold," returned Austin, "though I love your enthusiasm, and esteem your character, yet you must remember, that in this world the sun shines not always on the good, nor doth the thunder always strike the wicked. Sin frequently triumphs, and virtue sinks in sorrow—Why this is so, it is not for us to say; but happy do I deem that man, whose sin, by suffering, is in some measure expiated here: for the prospering of the wicked I regard only as accumulated fire, heaped upon their head.

"True," returned Leopold; "but what battle was ever won without an effort? what great act achieved without resolution? 'Tis not for one like the youth before you to think of fear. Should

Should I fall, father, who would weep for me? no parent's tears would bedew my grave; but should I rescue an innocent maid, her prayers would rise to Heaven, and sooth my departed spirit."

"My dear youth," replied the friar, "may the blessed Virgin shield thee. Dead as I ought to be to earthly concerns, in spite of my utmost endeavour, Margaret and thee force me to feel I am still a slave to the world. Thou sayest no tears would bedew thy grave—look at David, his eyes at the bare supposition give thee the lie; and believe me, Leopold, young as hath been our acquaintance, thy loss would fall heavy on my heart."

"My friends," exclaimed the youth, snatching a hand of each, "I have shuddered under paternal unkindness, but

but my spirit never failed: I have suffered fatigue, hunger, and thirst, but still my spirit supported me. Hardships and rough usage strengthened my mind, and made me regardless of danger; but kindness and affection cling round my heart, and awaken feelings that teach me what I might have been, had I possessed a parent's affection."

"Thou doest possess it," replied Austin, pressing the youth to his bosom, "and let that consideration withhold thy daring temper from rushing into danger."

Leopold sunk on his knee—"Friend of my infancy, sainted spirit of the holy friar John, look on thy representative; and thou, yet higher Power, that reignest above, receive my thanks; for though thou didst refuse me the natural affection

tion of a parent, thou hast bestowed on me the esteem of those, who, if they want the ties of blood, possess the yet stronger bonds of humanity, love, and friendship —— Oh, father," continued he, "I have envied even beasts, when I saw them caress their young: in the wickedness of my heart I have said, 'why are even those happier than I?' Now do I experience the extent of my folly, and praying pardon of Heaven, willingly pay to you the debt of affection, that otherways would lie dormant in my heart."

"My dear young man," said David, "before your arrival, I thought the children of my noble master, the pious dame Alice, the honoured father Austin, with my old Bridget, the companion of all my joys and sorrows, were the only objects

jects that interested me; but my heart, I feel, had still room for one more affection, and that place you have fully supplied."

"May I never lose my ground then," replied Leopold: "If I do, it will be the severest sorrow I have yet felt."

After some further discourse, of which the orphan Margaret was the chief topic, they returned to the cell, and taking a frugal meal, retired to their rushy couches.

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The ensuing day Leopold's head was fruitful in forming projects to rescue Margaret from her oppressors, but not one met the approbation of Austin, who, in truth, feared that he might only involve

volve himself in danger, without benefiting the orphan. David, as usual, collected what intelligence he could, but it only encreased their uneasiness; for Stephen had informed him, that the lady Margaret had been moved from her usual apartment into one at a more lonely part of the castle, and which was seldom inhabited; that it was conjectured the lord De Launcy had behaved to her with great harshness, for dame Alice appeared oppressed with sorrow, and her eyes swollen with tears.

As David made the recital, the usual quiet and patient spirit of Austin appeared to forsake him. His eyes sparkled with an animation that diffused life over his care-worn features, his brows were knit, and striking his forehead, he exclaimed—"Villain! for the first time

I feel

I feel the weight of my habit, and the holy vows which bind me—Oh sin, sin, what chains are so heavy as thine?—Oh, would it were possible, that but for once, face to face, and hand to hand, we might meet! then should thou learn, thou poor oppressor of women, what it was to contend with men—But, wretch that I am, I am tied down by guilt, and must not only bear sorrow myself, but sustain the anguish of seeing those dear to me by every human tye, suffer oppression."

Leopold gazed on the friar—"Father," said he, "if thus you speak, when age begins to shade your brow, at least allow something for the feelings of youth—Why will you not delegate me?—You think me weak and irresolute, or you would not call me your son,

and yet refuse to let me act a son's part."

Austin, recalled to recollection by Leopold's reply, assumed a composure he did not in reality experience, and uncertain how to act, the evening came on without his having formed any decided plan. He had no proof against De Launcy respecting Margaret; and as for her claim, that discussion, whenever it was brought forward, must necessarily take a length of time.

Leopold also appeared buried in contemplation. At length he said—"Were it even possible the lady Margaret could escape from the castle, I see no means how she could reach Germany, nor indeed how she could be secreted until the first search was over; for, undoubtedly, in case of her evasion, messengers would

would be sent every way in pursuit of her."

"By the kindness of the Franciscans at Berwick," answered Austin, "I have no doubt of being able to raise a sufficient sum to convey her, with Alice, under your escort to Bremen. That the most diligent search would be made, I have no doubt; but her removal from hence should not be attempted, till the first pursuit was over."

"But how would it be possible to conceal her in this vicinity, father?" said Leopold.

"In the many years I have been an exile here," returned he, "I have at different times not only explored every recess that branches from this cavern, but also on the reverse of the mountains, the hollows that more immediately open

to

to the sea. They are beyond imagination intricate, and one particularly so under this same rock, but higher towards the summit. There would I conceal her and Alice till the search was passed, and defy any one, less acquainted with the spot than myself, ever to discover them."

"That circumstance is fortunate," said Leopold, "should they find opportunity to escape."

"Alas! that is impossible," returned Austin: "they can never pass the castle gates, which are constantly attended by the lord De Launcy's men."

Little more discourse passed, and David bidding them farewell, they retired to rest.

CHAP. XI.

DAVID, the ensuing morning, found it impossible to obtain any news of Margaret, and the day passed heavily. The friar reassumed the discourse of sending Leopold to Bremen, but said he would at least wait some days, to endeavour to obtain a truer knowledge of Margaret's situation. They spent the greater part of the time in the chapel. In the afternoon, Leopold said, "With your permission, father, I will walk; I shall feel no reluctance, as I leave you accompanied."

Austin replied—"My dear son, the vexations I encounter make me too regardless of your health. I am loath to

to walk far myself, least I lose any opportunity of hearing from Margaret, who, if possible, I am convinced, would send to me—but go you, the sea breezes on the coast will renovate your strength."

Leopold made no reply, but shaking David by the hand, and pressing that of the friar to his lips, he left them.

"Methinks," said David, "that good youth is not in his usual spirits."

"I fear you judge truly," answered Austin. "I hope no return of his sickness will assail him; the dull life he leads here may affect him."

After some few more observations they joined in prayers, and remained in the chapel till the evening was far advanced, when wishing each other a quiet repose, they separated.

As Austin had no doubt of finding Leopold returned, he called aloud at the entrance of the cell: receiving no answer, he experienced some alarm; but as suddenly banishing it, he sat himself down in quiet expectation, and waited his coming.

Austin had not been long returned before the sky suddenly became overcast, the stars disappeared, and the wind began to whistle through the hollows of the rocks: the lightning, which at first only appeared to play in the firmament, became vivid and in forked points, striking on the tops of the lofty mountains, descended to the earth, while the tremendous crashing of the thunder re-echoed from rock to rock, and redoubled the horrors of the storm. At the protracted stay of Leopold, the friar, regardless

gardless of himself, hastened from his cell, making the woods and neighbouring hills resound with his name. His cares were unavailing, Leopold answered not, and weary and drenched with rain, he returned overwhelmed with apprehension. He feared the youth's errant from Germany had been discovered, and that he had been waylaid and slain; or judging more mildly, that overtaken in the mountains by the tempest, he had been struck by lightning. Unable to bear either reflection, he resolved to watch during the darkness of the night, and at break of day to go in search of the object of his alarm.

Reaching his lamp, he struck a light, and placing it on the projection of the rock, that usually served them for a table, he was astonished to see Leopold's

cloak laid thereon. Scarcely sensible of what he did, he snatched it up, but in so doing let fall something, which he instantly discovered to be the youth's tablets. So great was his alarm, that for some minutes he was unable to examine them, which when he did, he found these words.

"*Leopold Sternheim to his most honoured Friend and Father, Austin, greeting:*

"A truant and a wanderer from my infancy, methinks the fate still hangs over me:—Yet have my wanderings heretofore been productive of the most happy consequences. The first, you may recollect, was the means of my acquiring a friend, and through him an education, which otherways I never could

could have obtained: my next flight brought me acquainted with my beloved Ferdinand De Hoffman; and, as if increasing good was to be the result of my wanderings, the last gave me a director, a friend, and a father in yourself.

"If I have, in this case, behaved unbecoming that obedience and reverence due to you, I conjure you to pardon me; I am led to act as I have done by a desire so irresistible, that I should in vain endeavour to combat it. My life, since I became acquainted with you, has gained estimation in my own eyes; be assured, therefore, I am not going into danger, and remembered in your prayers, I have no doubt of speedily presenting before you,

"Your ever dutiful (though in this case renegade) son,

"LEOPOLD STERNHEIM."

Twice with astonishment did Austin peruse the writing.—" Inexplicable youth!" exclaimed he, " where and on what errant canst thou now be gone? On such a night too, and without thy cloak. Thank Heaven! however," continued he, " that some of my fears are removed. May'st thou, guided by the Saints, return in peace and safety."

Though some uneasiness still hung on Austin, his fears for the life of the youth subsided, and after recommending himself and friends to Heaven, he retired to rest.

* * * * *

David's astonishment, when he learned the departure of Leopold, surpassed all bounds, and various were the conjectures formed by Austin and himself of

of his intentions. The friar had no doubt but Margaret was concerned, but both David and himself knew, that all attempts to see her would be unavailing, as the castle was surrounded by a deep moat, and afterwards by a wall, impossible to be scaled from its height. The gates were constantly guarded, so that no stranger could enter unseen, and a bridge regularly drawn up at night. David surmised, that the youth, well knowing the father's desire to obtain the confession, had resolved to depart for Germany immediately, and surprise him by his speedy return. Vain, however, were all their conjectures, and in daily expectation they waited a fortnight, when they gave way to the most anxious fears on his account. During the time too, they had not been

able to collect any particulars respecting Margaret: the castle was full of company, and revellings and entertainments took place daily.

They were now entirely convinced that Leopold, if he had attempted to enter the castle, must have failed in the enterprize; but as no report had spread of any such circumstance, they could not suppose it had taken place, for some of the domestics must have known it, in which case it would have transpired. David's opinion respecting Leopold's journey to Bremen was then espoused by the friar, and in impatience they almost counted the hours, wishing and waiting his return.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

THE uneasiness of Margaret's freinds, respecting her situation, had not been groundless. David had truly learnt, that she had been removed from her own apartments to a part of the castle seldom inhabited; an arrangement, which took place the day after Austin's interview with the lord and lady De Launcy. The latter, with all the illiberality of low birth and natural meanness, had upbraided both Margaret and the dame, and as she could not otherwise gratify her malevolent spirit, ordered them to the before-named apartment.

"Those rooms I think well appropriated for your use," said she; "they have not been used before these fifteen years, and then by your friend Austin. The Baron chose them as best suited to bring him to reason; they will, I trust, have the same effect on you."

"If they were deemed by my father proper for his dearest friend, they must, undoubtedly, be so for me," answered Margaret. "They are, indeed, gloomy, but not so dark, but the piercing eye of Heaven can discern me."

"When I find you ready to acknowledge publicly your errors towards your best friends, I may, perhaps, change them, but till then, I shall maintain my resolution."

"Were they changed for a dungeon, I will never calumniate my father's honour,

honour, nor my mother's chastity," answered Margaret.

"A dungeon may then be your portion," returned lady De Launcy.

"It may—but even then, my oppressors will suffer more than I. From the dungeon's depth will my prayers ascend to Heaven, and find place before that Judge, who knows both your heart and mine."

"Cease this insolence, least you force me to try this high-sounding courage; for I will not be insulted in my own house by a daughter of Blanch Stanley."

"I am incapable of insulting any one," answered Margaret. "A daughter of the lady Fitzwalter will never stoop so low as to contend, unless in her own or her parent's vindication."

"Fie

"Fie on thee, bastard!" exclaimed she, "to glory in thy shame."

"Shame on those who attribute it to my parents," replied Margaret with heat. "The Lord Fitzwalter, in wedding my mother, received as much honour as he bestowed. 'Tis true she brought him no gold; but she brought him virtue, beauty, and a name untarnished, that had descended to her from parents, whose honour had never been sullied by reproach."

This reply of Margaret's was at once appropriated by lady De Launcy, who, exasperated beyond the rule of reason, said, "You shall answer this insolence. Leave the room Alice; you shall have no companion to sanction your daring."

Alice, instead of obeying, drew closer to Margaret, and clasped her garment.

—"Did

—" Did you not hear me, woman?" said lady De Launcy: " if you refuse obedience, I will turn you with disgrace from the castle."

" With disgrace you cannot, lady," answered Alice, " for in all just commands I will obey you; but forcing me from Margaret is not a just command. In that case, with my withered hands raised to Heaven, I would wander from town to town, and from house to house, relating the oppression I had suffered, and crying for revenge both from God and man.——You are rich and I am poor; but in this land justice is to be obtained for the beggar as well as for the king; and how will it sound, that the wife of lord De Launcy, and the widow of the noble baron Fitzwalter, turned from her

castle an old and grey-haired servant, because conscience and rectitude attached her to her deceased master's child? Think then again, before you repeat your commands: these orders, which would distress me, would disgrace yourself."

The usual mildness of Alice made such a reply unexpected, and lady De Launcy concealing her displeasure under the mask of dissimulation, replied,

"I have no intention of ever discarding you, unless forced to take that step.——Nay, Margaret, if she would not irritate me by falsehood, and asseverations that inevitably must fall to the ground, I would take care to provide for; but to be braved with insolence surpasses my patience."

Neither

Neither Margaret nor Alice made any reply.

" I will order you what is necessary," added she ;" but you will meet my severest displeasure, should you attempt to leave these apartments without my concurrence."

Lady De Launcy had no sooner left them, than Margaret, throwing her arms around the venerable Alice, wept bitterly. The dame for some time joined her tears with those of the orphan ; but at length resuming her composure, she said, " Cheer up, my beloved child, or rather weep for your enemies than for yourself. Heaven be merciful to their sinful souls ! I shudder to consider the weight of guilt that hangs over them. These apartments are, indeed, gloomy, but they were the

the place where our good friend Austin first regained any degree of composure. On that couch I have seen him sit for hours, his eyes fixed on some inanimate object; in that great chair your father used to be seated by him, endeavouring to calm his mind, while his own noble heart was torn with a thousand contending passions.——Remember, Margaret, you are the baron Fitzwalter's daughter, and let that remembrance enable you to bear with fortitude, the trifling evils that such a mind as that of the lady De Launcy can inflict."

By such discourse Alice by degrees won Margaret from the acuteness of her sorrow, to pay attention on the surrounding objects.

"To be sure," continued the dame, "your

" your other apartments were more agreeably situated, being in the heart of the castle; but there we should hourly have met some of lord De Launcy's family, who might have insulted us, while, on the contrary, here we are retired, and need expect but few visitors."

" True, my dear dame, I thank you for that observation; it has at once reconciled me to the change: and could we but make father Austin acquainted with our situation, my mind would be comparatively easy."

" His indefatigable friendship, I have no doubt, will discover it, and take every means in his power to counteract your enemies."

For some days Margaret and Alice saw no one but the lord De Launcy's favourite

favourite lackey, who regularly brought their food. The sound of merriment that echoed through the castle, let them know it was full of company, but their chamber was too distant for them to be annoyed by it.

* * * * *

It appears by the subsequent conduct of the lord and lady De Launcy, that they began to doubt being able to intimidate Margaret into a relinquishment of her right; for about a fortnight after her confinement, one day, as with Alice she was in earnest conversation, Lord De Launcy entered the chamber. He was less haughty than usual, and taking a seat he informed her, that more mindful of her happiness

happiness than she could expect, he came to propose establishing her honourably in marriage. That the party he alluded to was a young man of great promise, and who had acted as his secretary in all his embassies. That lady De Launcy proposed giving her a portion, and, provided she relinquished her chimerical ideas, he would take on himself the fortune of the person he wished her to espouse.

Margaret made no reply till he concluded; then answered.——"I thank you, my lord, I feel no inclination to marry; but were it otherways, I should shun a match of convenience.——As to a portion, if I cannot claim one from the father from whom I sprung, I undoubtedly have no right to expect any from strangers.——In that case I will

will labour to support life. In honest industry there is no shame; but there is much in wedding for convenience, and in a rank, which could my father look down from heaven he would not approve."

"Obstinate girl! my kindness meets only insult; confinement has not yet subdued your spirit, but beware how you urge me too far."

"I but answered to your questions, my lord," said she.

"Perhaps you flatter yourself, that my son, Richard De Launcy, ensnared by your beauty, may propose to espouse you?"——

"Stop, my lord," interrupted Margaret, "if you do not already know it, learn it now.—Your son has received my decided opinion, and from which nothing

nothing shall swerve me.—Nay, more to ease your mind at once, was death on one side, and Richard De Launcy on the other, so may my prayers find favour in the sight of Heaven, if I would not prefer the former to the latter."

"He at least is much bounden to you," replied he, sarcastically; "his passion must, indeed, be strong, if such a contemptuous opinion does not change it."

"Far be contempt from me; I simply mean to convince you, that your fears on that account are ill-founded. It is more than probable I may never marry; but should I, it must be the man whom my heart distinguishes from all others; it must be a man whom, could my parents look down, they should

should say, " Thou hast chosen wisely, Margaret, as far as human knowledge can foresee."

" And on whose judgment, in that case, would you rely?" said De Launcy.

" Not on my own, my lord; I would consult my elders, my friends, those whom I am convinced would judge better than myself."

" Those friends, I fear, have already misguided you.——Think again on my offer, before you reject it finally; fortune once lost, is not easily to be regained."

Margaret would have replied, but leaving the apartment hastily, he gave her no opportunity.

" This secretary," said Alice, is doubtless one of his creatures, whom he

he can use at his pleasure. I vow," added she, "that on hearing the bare proposal, the angry blood rushed in my cheeks. All men are indeed alike dust, but there are distinctions in society, that it befits us to keep, and what might do well for the daughter of a start-up baron of yesterday, would disgrace a house so ancient and noble as that of Fitzwalter."

* * * * *

Two pages of the manuscript were here so much erased, that they could not be deciphered; but it appears they do not break materially on the thread of the narrative.

CHAP. XIII.

THE night was dark, save when flashes of lightning illumined the sky; the rain fell in torrents, and the hail beat with fearful violence on the head of the defenceless traveller. Within the cottages of the domain all was hushed as death; no light peeped from the casements, no sound of mirth enlivened them. During the life of both the late baron Fitzwalter and his father, their presence, like the return of spring, spread universal gladness, but for the lord and lady De Launcy, no joy greeted them, no tongue hailed or blessed them.——Cold and cheerless the cottagers had retired to rest, for their

their lord's return spread no plenty, save alone to those who needed it not, and there it glutted to abundance; for the rich fatted in the hall, while the poor starved at the gate.

On this tremendous night, the whole castle was lighted; the visitors were many and of high degree, and all that art could devise was called forth to entertain them.

In the outer hall waited the old servants of the house, and the lord De Launcy's domestics, regaling themselves on the refuse of the dainties, and endeavouring to beguile the horrors of the storm in the comforts that surrounded them.

"Holy Mary! 'tis a fearful night," said Stephen, "I trust the evil spirits of the mountains have not gotten loose.

——Father Austin has kept them in pure subjection these many years.—— He is heavily displeased about the lady Margaret,—in truth she is a sweet flower. If the father has the secret of keeping the spirits still, why may he not have the secret of letting them loose? Some years ago, not a man in the village would have gone at night past the old chapel for a baron's ransom, and now none scruple, so they have a companion; and many will even venture alone."

"But how should you suppose this old friar gained such power over the spirits?" said Jaques, De Launcy's favourite lackey.

"Why, marry, by prayer and fasting."

"If that's the way of gaining the

mastery over them," answered Jaques, "I shall never attain it.—But pray, Stephen, did you ever see any of these ghosts?"

"No, but I have heard such horrible noises of a windy night, as I passed the mountains, attending the late baron, as would have made your heart quake. He was courageous enough to pass on without heeding them, and used to scoff at our fears, but no one shall persuade me, but that evil spirits are let loose in such tempests."

"In faith," returned Jacques, "I'll take care not to meet them then, unless they come to nose me at the fire side. —The howling of the storm is dreadful here, and even in the great hall the mirth cannot drown it. I would

we had been able to hire minstrels, but none were to be engaged nearer than Berwick, and the day was too far advanced for us to send thither.—— But come, drink about, I shall be glad when we return to court; a serving-man is out of his element in these solitary dwellings.——At court, now, when I attend my lord, if you was but to see how the queen and the ladies will look at me——"

"Look at you!" repeated Stephen, "that's, I suppose, for the cast in your eye?"

"No, you old fool, it's for my manner.——Not a lackey at court knows his business, or transacts it more gracefully, than I do.——Then for the cast in my eye, as you call it, 'tis not the fashion at court to look straight forward; a man

a man there looks to the right, and to the left, and when he sees a good path he takes it."—

At that moment, during an interval of the tempest, the soft strains of a pipe were heard, and so exquisitely melodious, that they attracted universal attention.——" By my soul," continued Jaques, " if that is one of Stephen's ghosts, it is at least a very pleasant one.—Hark! again,—how delightful must such music be, if uninterrupted by the storm."

" Heaven preserve us all!" said Stephen; " 'tis not good to be scoffers, but this music, I ween, comes from no mortal cause. I know every soul in the hamlet, and not one there can play on any instrument.——We

have had no music since the baron's time."

"Stephen says true," said another of the domestics, "my lord would fain have hired music, but could procure none."

The piper, during these observations, continued to play, and the storm subsiding, the clear and harmonious melody resounded through the hall.

For some time they had listened with mingled dread and pleasure, when lord De Launcy's page came by his master's command, to order the musician (whoever he might be) into the hall.

"Mercy forbid," replied Stephen, "I would lay any wager no human being is to be seen.——Who do you think would stand in all this storm, piping

piping at the gate.——Formerly, indeed, when we kept open house, such a thing might have been, but now it is impossible."

Stephen's observation had evidently an effect; for none of the serving-men offered to stir, until a second message from their lord forced them to obedience. Jaques then, assuming an appearance of courage, declared them all poltroons.——"Come along," said he, "I am accustomed to the court, where we laugh at such follies: no one talks of ghosts now, unless it be old nurses to scare children to sleep." Though Jaques spoke thus, he was strongly infected with his comrades' fears, and opening the gate cautiously, and in a body, they discovered at the outward portal the musician.——If his music

had charmed them, at that moment it lost all its effect, and the most hideous of Stephen's visions appeared realized to their fancy; for by the light of the torches the piper appeared a tall Ethiopian of the darkest hue*. Valiant Jaques was the first to give way, and uttering a fearful cry, he measured his length on the earth. Universal confusion ensued; the domestics fled different ways, while the scared page ran back to his master, to relate the strange phœnomenon. "Cowardly knaves!" exclaimed lord De Launcy, "lead the way, I will see this object of your fears myself;"—so saying, with some of his guests he passed the hall and came to the portal.

The

* Blacks were at this period almost unknown in England.

The piper still played, as if unconscious of having caused any alarm, and when called to by lord De Launcy, testified no mark of obedience. Approaching him with their torches, he however ceased his music, and lord De Launcy ordering him to follow him, he obeyed.

"Fools," said he to his men, "are you not ashamed to be frightened at a poor Ethiopian!"—"Come hither, fellow, tell me from whence came you?"

"From where the hot sun makes the leaves brown and the fruit sweet."

"What is your country called?"

"Home."

"What was your father?"

"A man."

"Where dwells he?"

"At home."

"'Tis an idiot," said De Launcy.—"Who taught you to play on the pipe?"

"Myself."

"Who feeds you?"

"Those who give me bread."

"What can you do?"

"What I am bid."

"Play then a tune on your flagelet."

He played, changing his note alternately from grave to gay, till all regarded him with an admiration that conquered the disgust occasioned by his complexion, and his want of understanding.

"Where are you now going?" said lord De Launcy.

"I don't know,—I should like to stay here."

"Suppose I was to engage you as a lackey," said De Launcy, "how would you behave?"

"Like

"Like my fellows."

"Would you be honest?"

"What would you give me?"

"What money do you require?"

"I don't love money."

"What do you love?"

"Beef and wine."

"Suppose I give them to you," said De Launcy, "what will you do to deserve them."

"Eat and drink, and when I am full, go to sleep like the other lackeys."

Lord De Launcy laughed, as did his guests. "Nature hath denied all to this creature but ear," said he. "Wouldst thou like to be my fool?"

"No—I will be my lady's fool, and my lord's knave."

De Launcy laughed again—"Well," said

said he, "be honest. I engage thee; but behave well to thy fellows."

"Will they behave well to me?"

"I hope so."

"If they do not, I will beat them."

"Thou must not do that—thou must complain to me."

"I will beat them first; and complain to thee afterwards."

"Thou art a proper well-built fellow. Could'st thou fight for the King."

"Yes, if I loved him."

"Doest thou not love him then?"

"I don't know, he never asked me."

"That does not signify, thou must love him unasked and unseen."

"Does he love me, unasked and unseen?"

"He

"He knows thee not, therefore cannot do so."

"I know him not, therefore cannot do so."

"By my life thou art a keen knave amidst thy folly. But get thee in; eat, drink, and dry thy garments, then thou shall play to my guests in the hall. Lord De Launcy then called to his men, and ordered them to entertain the stranger; and their fears having subsided, they readily obeyed.

De Launcy made his guests merry with an account of the wandering musician, who, after having taken some food, was introduced into the hall. He played for a considerable time, to the astonishment and admiration of the company; when lord De Launcy, willing to entertain them with his folly, said

said—"I had forgotten to ask thee, what art thou called?"

"Cuthbert."

"Who gave thee that name?"

"I gave it myself."

"If I mistake not the meaning of that appellation, is skill and cunning: set aside thy music, thou possesseth little skill, I fear."

"I can carve a custard, master."

"Well answered, and eat it when thou hast done——but canst thou tell me, which is the fairest lady at the table?"

"Yes, if you can tell me which has the least pride."

"On my life, I know not which thou art, most knave or fool—But say, can thy sagacity discover that?"

"No, master, I can only see the outside;

side; but as you are rich, perhaps, you can look further."

"If thou wilt be faithful, I will be thy mistress," said lady De Launcy.

"I thank you, lady, but you are too fine for my mistress; my mistress must have fewer trappings, and I care not if she were somewhat younger."

Lady De Launcy was by no means pleased with this reply, but joined in the laugh that it occasioned.—Cuthbert played during the rest of the evening, when his lord ordered him to be shewn to a chamber, which his comrades took care to chuse as distant from their own as possible; for though their first fears had subsided, they felt a strong dislike to having an Ethiopian for their neighbour.

While mirth and festivity reigned in the

the hall, the true owner of the domain pined in her lonely apartment; yet did her mind feel a conscious support, that neither the high seasoned dainties of the table, nor the rich wines of foreign climates, could bestow, even for one hour, on the hearts of her oppressors.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

An acquaintance of two or three days began to reconcile the domestics of the castle to the complexion of their new companion, whose music was so highly approved, that he constantly played in the hall, during the time that lord and lady De Launcy dined and supped. His answers to his master's questions, notwithstanding his folly, had a mixture of pertinency, that afforded him amusement; and as he was uncommonly well-formed and personable, he resolved to retain him among his followers. Cuthbert's humour was not, however, so pleasing to his comrades; among them he spoke less, and if they attempted

attempted to play upon his folly, he gave them to understand, he was quick of affront, and active to resent it. When unemployed by his lord, he would take his pipe, and calling forth its most melodious strains, walk round the castle till after the day was closed, and the bell rung the supper hour, when he would hasten to his appointed duty. His observance was not lost on De Launcy. "That fellow," said he, "is a strange mixture of shrewdness and folly, he is obedient to my commands, and doth not appear to forget them, yet on the most common topic, I cannot obtain a rational reply."

In the domestics' hall, one day, Jaques having just come from taking Margaret's usual meal, Stephen said, now, I pray, tell me, master Jaques, how

how doth my young mistress? She is accustomed to exercise; I fear such close house-keeping will injure her health."

"On the honour of a courtier, she is well," answered Jaques, "and as beautiful as an angel.—"

The remainder of his speech was broken off by a summons from his master, and Stephen and Cuthbert being left alone, the latter, who was sitting apparently inattentive to what passed, said,

"Hath Jaques got an angel? I wish I had an angel, nay even a noble; but no one gives me money."

"Jaques doth not mean an angel of gold," answered Stephen, "he means our young mistress."

"Is

"Is she an angel?" said Cuthbert, "hath she wings?"

"I would she had," replied Stephen, "for then she might fly away. Alack! poor young lady, she leads a dull life—I wish, Cuthbert, you would now and then play a tune under her window; she is very fond of music, and touches the lute sweetly."

"Will she pay me?" said Cuthbert.

"Pay thee!" repeated Stephen, "she has no money, or she is as generous as a prince."

"Then I will trust her, Stephen; but remember that I am paid.—Doth she live here?"

"Yes. When thou walkest round the castle, observe on the north side; that

that fronts the mountains, there is a court, in the further angle of which, there are four windows: play there."

Cuthbert asked no more questions, but in the afternoon took his pipe, and in his usual manner walked round the castle several times, until at length, as if suddenly recollecting Stephen's request, he turned into a lonely court, that he had not before explored, and discovered the four windows that had been described to him. Here making a halt, he played an air, in so soft and pensive a strain, that it could not fail of attracting attention.

Margaret and Alice, within their apartment, instantly heard the sound—"What heavenly music," said Margaret, "surely, dame, 'tis some blessed spirit sent to comfort us in our melancholy

choly abode." So speaking, by the assistance of a chair, she raised herself to the window; but suddenly recoiling,

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed she, "it is a man, whose complexion is intirely black.——But how weak I am," added she, after a short pause, "it is doubtless one of those people of whom father Austin has told me."

Alice, in her turn, looked at the stranger.—"Though I never saw any of that complexion before," said she, "it must be so. I should judge he is some minstrel, that lord De Launcy has engaged; and to speak truth, by the specimen we have heard, he hath been lucky in his choice."

"He hath, indeed," answered Margaret; "he hath good features, dame, and appears gracefully shaped."

Whatever

Whatever might be the faults in Cuthbert's understanding, he was quick-sighted enough to discover that he had attracted attention, and changing his note from grave to gay, he played so lively an air, as might, for a time, have even banished the sense of pain.

The dame and Margaret regarded him with astonishment. "'Tis plain," said the latter, "he plays only for our amusement, for there are no other inhabitants on this side the dwelling."

After playing for a short time, Cuthbert retired.

* * * * *

Few minds in the castle were more ill at ease than Richard De Launcy's. He sincerely lamented having informed

his father of the discovery he had made, for the knowledge that it was wished to espouse Margaret distracted him. He was, however, sufficiently aware, that she was not of a character to be influenced in so material a point, except by her own heart, and the councils of those she denominated her best friends: he judged also, that fear and confinement might, in some measure, have altered her former opinion respecting his proposals, and resolved to try once more to persuade her to listen to him.

For this purpose, watching an opportunity, when all were buried in dissipation, he stole to her apartments, which, though distant from the more inhabited part of the castle, were not secured by outward fastenings. He

announced himself by a gentle stroke on the door, which was opened by Alice, and requesting admittance, was introduced into the chamber.

"Forgive me," said he, "if I intrude; but, notwithstanding your contempt, I cannot avoid once more entreating to be heard—"

"If on the topic on which I before returned an answer, I would wish to be excused," replied Margaret. "I have no private business with the son of lord De Launcy—"

"I vainly flattered myself," interrupted he, "that your former conduct towards me, had conquered my passion; but the delusion is vanished, and I once more throw myself on your mercy—— Far from interested views, should your birth-right be acknowledged, in any

manner you please, and by what bond soever your friends may wish, the whole domain shall be secured to yourself.—Your hand is all I wish.—Give me but the hope of possessing that blessing, and in spite of the vigilance of ten thousand spies, the gates of the castle shall be open to you.—My life, my fortune, are at your command: I will forsake all to gain your favour."

"Liberty is undoubtedly dear," returned Margaret; "but I will never incur a debt, which my heart feels it would be impossible to pay—"

"To the son of the lord De Launcy," interrupted he.

"I doubtless consider lord De Launcy as one of my oppressors; and though I cannot view him as the principal, yet he is forward enough in persecuting me,

to

to make me shun all nearer intercourse with his family. But, exclusive of this avowal, was Richard De Launcy King of Britain, he would never be the choice of Margaret Fitzwalter."

De Launcy's pride awakened by this answer, he replied—"I need not inform you, that a plan is in agitation to force you to wed. I think you superior to most women in resolution; but what will a weak maid's prayers or tears avail, against force, and the dictates of those, whom law and justice will consider as her best friends?"

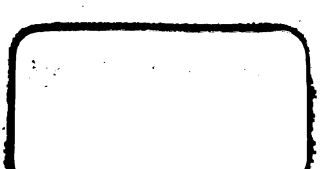
"I wish to avoid insult," answered Margaret, "but I am neither to be frightened, nor soothed into acting contrary to my fixed resolution—"

"Must I then leave you without the smallest hope?" said he. "Have I not

I not offered to relinquish all for you—to fly with you where you please?"

"I thank you," returned Margaret. "Lord De Launcy accuses me of wishing to ensnare you; shall I, therefore, entreat you to visit me no more, least, to remove that suspicion, I be forced to discover to him, that your presence here is without my concurrence."

With this only answer was Richard De Launcy obliged to retire; his heart at once struggling with the contending passions of love, anger, pride, and revenge.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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